

A Daughter of the Manse

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"His Reverence the Rector"

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PART I
BEFORE THE STORM

A Daughter of the Manse

CHAPTER I

THE COMMODORE'S LODGINGS

IN the reign of the late Queen Victoria, in the later thirties, about the date to which fashion in its vagaries is harking back in a revival of short waists, tucked skirts, pelerines for the shoulders and mittens for the hands, the parish of Rowanden in that zone of Scotland where the Highlands and the Lowlands meet, where there are blue mountain ranges in the background, and in the foreground green pastures, yellow cornfields and leafy "plantings," was considerably more remote with more local peculiarities and old-world customs than it has to-day.

There was not only no railway, far or near, there was no coach within six or seven miles. There was no town of any considerable size—a town which had waterworks and gasworks—within the same distance. The Cairnie Water—the river of the parish—was, like many larger Scotch rivers, too rapid in its flow, too much inclined to brawl and fret to be navigable, even if there had been traffic on its banks to navigate. It afforded a little trout fishing, and had a ford here

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and there where, for the convenience of the inhabitants on either side, there was a boat which on due summons ferried travellers across the barrier; there were also gravelly reaches where at certain seasons horses with carts could cross, without further inconvenience than floundering somewhat in the stream.

That was all that the Cairnie Water contributed by way of aid to the sociality and business of the parish, unless, indeed, by the circumstance that the most of the better-class houses together with the "cotton"—the village and its village church and manse, not far off—were built within sight and sound of the water. They were thus linked by it and brought nearer together than they would have been if they had been scattered broadcast over the country. These better-class houses, consisting mostly of small farmhouses, for the parish was strictly rural, were few, since Rowanden was little in size as well as rural in character. Without much of either pretension or picturesqueness, the most of them were snug and cheerful-looking, surrounded by their battalions of stacks—some of these seeming larger than the houses themselves, and their never-failing stir of life from cock-crow to moonrise in the presence of horses and cows, cackling hens and gobbling geese, brawny ploughmen and shot-up "halfins."

The whole country, including the cotton, had the same aspect. It was not romantic, its mountain range was too distant, it was only homely, fresh and sweet. The cotton profited by being of a straggling nature; the thatched cottages, frequently a good many yards apart, turped their gable-ends quite as often as their fronts to what figured as the street, and was simply

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a wide grass-grown road commanding glimpses of the Cairnie Water and peeps of kailyards, with an occasional ash tree or thorn bush intruding its green among the grey stone biggins.

The seamy side to the village was not its "feal" or turf dykes bearing their own growth of grass dividing the modest domains, nor was it the brown draw-wells in the corners near the peat stacks, which formed lean-tos up to the roofs, it was the lingering abominations of "middens" and "jaw-holes" which revealed their presence to more senses than one. But in that country, to these hardy country folks, ignorance was bliss, and what they had never known themselves exempt from, they saw no cause to complain of.

The natives were like the country and the cotton, their wholesome country breeding and lack of sophistication constituted their chief charm, while they also had their two sides—their honest country bumpkin side, and their brutal Caliban side—as was known to his sorrow by Dr Archibald Menzies, the learned doctor of divinity and meek and pious man of God. He was content with Rowanden Kirk and Rowanden Manse and their minimum income which any well-to-do tradesman might have despised, meted out to him according to the market price of so many chalders of grain, with his handful of more or less humble parishioners—who yet filled the tiny ancient kirk with its stone roof and its great square tower to overflowing—as his father had been before him.

Naturally the principal houses in the parish were the Manse and the Commadore's Lodgings—a name given to the dwelling of Dr Menzies' brother, the Commadore, who, having sailed from his last station and

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seen his last ship dockyarded, came back to the port from which he had started, where he knew every man and woman's history, and could recall every face.

He settled for the rest of his life with his motherless son and his staff of a middle-aged housekeeper, who was also a distant cousin, a single maid-servant, and an old sailor who had lost a leg but could hop about by the help of a wooden substitute. He considered himself, and was considered by his master, perfectly able to look after the day labourer who dug the garden, and to take care of the high gig and bony, elderly horse which the Commodore rode and drove badly, and the plump young pony which was kept for the Commodore's fourteen-year-old boy, Neil Menzies.

It was fortunate that there was a house found in the parish more suitable for the Commodore and his establishment, which was looked upon in those days and in Rowanden, as not only genteel but positively imposing, than one of the farmhouses. These presented a window on each side of the door and three windows above in a line—indicating a parlour, a kitchen (with a box bed) and a dark dairy, the one opening from the other, a family bedroom, a bed-closet and a store closet with a meal girdel and a linen press, while the farm steading, built round the "reed" or open pen for cattle or sheep, was in close proximity, and afforded as much space in the matter of stable, byre, pigs' "cruive" and hen-house for the comfort and well-being of the valued stock of the farm, as was apportioned to their masters and mistresses.

The Commodore, who had been restricted for a

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large part of his life to a cabin for his dining-room, study, and bedroom in one, and to a quarter-deck for his promenade ground, would not have quarrelled with the limited area of a farmhouse. But he had a considerable sense of personal dignity and a still greater perception of the honour of his branch of the two services, and it would not have been in consonance with these ideas that he—a naval officer of some rank—should live like a “pauchler,” the farmer of a small farm who did a good deal of the work with his own horny hands, neither did the Commodore desire such associations for his boy. And the lodgings, to which he finally gave his name, were certainly unlike the other houses in the parish, not excepting the Manse, by not being destitute either of a kind of a rude dignity or of a share of picturesqueness. They were situated in the Den which gave the parish part of its name, a hollow between high banks thickly feathered with rowans, geans, fir trees and birches. Half way up one of the banks was a broad terrace extending to the end of the den, where it joined the high road. On this terrace from time immemorial had stood a grey tower, the upper part of which was ruinous—but the lower stories—solidly built with ivy-clad walls—were still fit to form a fairly commodious dwelling-house.

Before the Commodore came back from the high seas it had not been inhabited within the memory of man. Its very name was a tradition—“the auld Castle of Pitthrisk”—the title had descended for generations, but there were no Pitthrisk lands within the bounds, no family claiming territorial possession from the days of the Bruce. It was a useless append-

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age of a small estate which had changed owners more than once within recent years. If anybody knew its origin and its founders, it should have been "the Doctor," Dr Menzies at the Manse, since he had contributed his quota to that statistical history of Scotland in which every parish minister took his share. It was the shrewd scheme of one of Scotland's worthies, Sir John Sinclair. But even the minister could find nothing in the old records which he was fond of studying, that bore reference to Pitthrisk—the very name, with nothing to attach to it, was likely to be forgotten or superseded. Only the tower was nobody's bargain, for with the obtuse thriftlessness which the thriftiest communities show at times, none of the small yeomen farmers or cock lairds who spent hard-earned money in building their unornamented, inconvenient farmhouses, dreamt of annexing the tower and putting it to use. Possibly they shrank from it as having belonged to the rough riding times and been in all probability more of a freebooters' den, than the douce habitation of tillers of the ground.

It remained for the Commodore in perambulating the parish to discover a resting-place, to detect the possibilities of the old tower, to hire it on a long lease and at a low rent. He set about forthwith making it habitable by the free rather than the æsthetic use of paint and paper, by making the terrace road so that it could be ridden upon without danger, by building a wall and running up a fence or two, and laying out a vegetable and fruit garden—sufficient for the wants of a gentleman's small family. He ended by erecting a weather-tight dry stone

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structure which sheltered the high-shouldered gig, and held a couple of stalls for the horse and the pony, besides being provided with a loft to which Bill, the ex-sailor and Commodore's man of-all-work, managed to climb, and where he slept and kept his bunk.

When the transformation was accomplished to the astonishment and edification of the Commodore's neighbours, they immediately showed their appreciation of it, by dropping the meaningless name "Pitthrisk Castle," destitute of association, and rechristened the place "The Commodore's Lodgings." This was a full explanation of what the tower existed for, with a personal application.

There the Commodore installed himself and proceeded to carry out the daily routine of his life, which was to continue till its last day dawned. His first act of a morning was to throw up his bedroom window and put out his grizzled head, regardless whether the sun shone or the rain fell, to ascertain, by evidence which could not be disputed, the state of the weather, and to consult a vane which he had had fixed to the crumbling pinnacle of what might once have been a rampart, and see in what direction the wind blew. The worst in connection with the Commodore's Lodgings was that they commanded no view beyond that of the sky and a tangle of trees and bushes, with the occasional bends and bars of a footpath which impatient young feet, instead of going round by the main road and the terrace road, had trodden, with hardly a winding detour, round the projecting roots of a tree or a miniature boulder, right up the wooded bank. But the view was enough for the Commodore's

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purpose, since it caught the sky and the scallop of the vane. And if the head was bent downwards and the neck sufficiently craned, the eye could take in a corner of the garden and the building which was called "the stable," with Bill as likely as not, stripped to his corduroy breeches and his shirt sleeves, hopping about grooming the horse or the pony, and uttering a loud hissing sound as he performed for them their equine toilet.

Then the Commodore dressed leisurely and with precision. He was a tall man with a long face weather-beaten and slightly pitted with smallpox, which never failed to remind imaginative people of shot and shell, and in a loose way of sea fights. Sunday and Saturday he wore the same dress—black trousers and a dark blue vest, replaced in summer by a buff vest, ending in a high black stock, over which the sharp corners of his shirt collar just peeped. His ample surtout was of blue cloth, retaining a distinct reflection of undress naval uniform—the effect was increased when he went abroad by the blue cloth cap which took the place of a tall silk hat. The reds and blues of uniform were still in the ascendant where even the half-pay representatives of either of the services appeared. It lent them a never-failing distinction and interest which were supposed to be patriotic. For it was not much more than fifteen years since the battle of Waterloo, and twenty years since the battle of Trafalgar, and our national defences and defenders were still a serious question much in the foreground.

When the Commodore's private devotions were concluded—for he was a minister's son, an elder in

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his brother's kirk, and not merely now when he had retired, but when he was on active service, he, no more than his Admiral Collingwood, forgot to say his prayers—whether in storm or in calm, before an engagement or during a truce. He breakfasted early with his son and the Commodore's housekeeper and cousin, Mrs Ord, on a substratum of porridge and milk—the elders as well as the junior—followed by an upper layer of eggs and bacon, or herrings, salt or red, and coffee. Then there was Neil to be seen off to school as long as he attended the parish school, which, in order to be in the middle of the parish and conveniently situated for all the scholars, was a mile and a half distant from Rowanden Kirk and cotton, and two miles from the Commodore's Lodgings. After Neil had mounted his pony and ridden off, the Commodore being on the spot took the opportunity of making an inspection of the precincts, the stable, the stock of hay in the bin, and oats in the corn chest, the garden, the pig-stye, for though a country house might dispense with a cow it could not, apart from disgraceful mismanagement and utter disregard of economics, be without a pig to fatten on the refuse of the family meals.

If that amount of survey was not sufficient the Commodore would not think it beneath his dignity as an officer and gentleman, when he was perambulating his garden, to pull up a run-to-seed turnip or carrot, and to fill his hands with the outer leaves of cabbages and greens in order to fling them to the grateful recipient in the stye. Before he re-entered the house he would unchain Hector, the curly-haired Newfoundland, who, though he was confined to his

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kennel during the night, was set at liberty for the day, and was at Neil's heels every moment the boy was not in school.

His morning saunter over, the Commodore would repair as briskly as if he had still the welfare of a frigate and its company on his mind, to his room—library, study, business room combined—with a dingy carpet, no window curtains, a bookcase with glass doors—locked except when the owner was selecting a book—a square table without a cover, dusted with fear and trembling by Mrs Ord's own hands, because it bore the Commodore's "papers" and books. His house accounts neatly filed and with their appointed place at one corner so that he could have laid his hands upon them in the dark—not that he was ever likely to want to do so—his diary, which he kept as regularly as if the safety of the service and of Europe depended upon it, his twice a week newspaper, his last *Blackwood*, the book he was reading—he always had one to resort to when he had finished his newspaper and arrived at the final page in the month's *Blackwood*—a book which he took from his private collection irrespective of the fact that he had read it before a good many times. If a book was worth reading the Commodore considered it could bear re-reading, it could not be read too often. Good books should be possessed by their readers till they could almost say the contents by heart, and yet the readers should be able to return to them with unabated profit and pleasure—surely the Commodore's belief embodied the greatest triumph of authorship. A common, hard-seated armchair was all the lounge the Commodore permitted himself; indeed, the only

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sign of relaxation and refreshment visible was the owner's silver snuffbox at his elbow.

Plain and bare to asceticism, the Commodore's sanctum was reckoned sacred by his household, no member venturing to touch its treasures, except Mrs Ord in her official capacity, no visitor presuming to cross the threshold uninvited, with three exceptions. The awe which the Commodore inspired was a tribute of genuine reverence awarded to his innate dignity as an officer and gentleman. For he was no loud-voiced tyrant in his own house, and to all women of whatever age and degree he bore himself with old-world deference. Yet Jenny, the single handmaid of the establishment, gave a version of the truth when she said she would "suner meet a raging lion than see the look on the maister's face when his fire has been let gang oot, or his butes have been forgotten." It must have been an expressive look since no word of censure followed. He was as chary of his words of approbation. It might have been said that Jenny had never heard his voice as addressed to herself.

It was this natural shyness together with an equally characteristic gravity which helped to produce the effect in a man who was the reverse of the ordinary type of a hectoring, frank, free sailor. One felt curious to know if he had ruled on ship-board with the same economy of speech and demonstration of feeling. According to the factotum, Bill, whose evidence was all that was to be had, the slightest signal from the Commodore received as much attention as the longest string of commands from the Lord High Admiral. The Commodore was a man to be respected by the main body of his own class, to be feared by the

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voluble illiterate, and either to be loveless or to be loved passionately by the few.

In the shire and parish where his boyhood had been spent, to which he had chosen to come back because his kindred were there—some mouldering in the dust of the churchyard—some, like his twin brother Archie, the doctor of divinity at the Manse, his wife and his large young family, very much in the body—and because, though he had not the courage to give more than a word or a nod of recognition to old familiar faces, he cared to be among them, the respect and fear included a profound trust. The Commodore belonged to the people and they to him, as they had soon reason to realise. For not long after his return to Rowanden there was a bad outbreak of fever in the parish, a proof that the fine, sweet country air could not always combat successfully some of the insanitary practices of the natives. He not only gave to his brother, with strict orders that the donor of the money should not be made known, a larger sum than his half pay and such savings as he had made from his prize money warranted, he wrote, as his neighbours had an instinct he never would have written for himself, to the chief landowner in the district, an elderly nobleman who did not visit this portion of his estates once in half a dozen years. When a younger son and a midshipman he had been a messmate of the Commodore's. And he was so taken by surprise at this appeal from the long-silent voice of a modest man that, though he was notoriously close-fisted as well as burdened with debt, he gave orders for some of the new building and repairing which the dilapidated state of the farmhouses and cottages on his pro-

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perty called for urgently, in the name of common humanity.

Truth, like murder, will out, and from the date when the Commodore's good deeds could not be hidden his humbler neighbours regarded him as their strong, silent, protecting friend whom they might not approach confidently as they approached his brother, their minister—a gentle, genial little man in the midst of his learning—with garrulous tales of their enterprises and difficulties, but who knew them and understood them and never forgot even their Christian names, which had been bandied freely along with his own when they sat on the same bench, under the same master's vigilant eye, in the parish school. He would stand up for them when occasion required they never doubted. They had an instinctive perception that though he rapped out no big sea oaths he was peremptory, that though he meddled with nobody that he was arbitrary and would not stand being crossed. They were not without a suspicion that he might be implacable. But when all was said and done, he was their Commodore, their old minister's son, who had elected to pass the evening of his days, and to lie at rest among them, who would have his only child, his boy, reared as he had been reared. And to these simple folks his was a grand présence of a man, what was inscrutable in him to them tending to increase the impressiveness of his physical advantages, his tall figure, which had nothing of a rolling gait, but rather showed a military erectness and firmness of step, his weather-beaten, impassive face, unflinching in the very shyness which bound and fettered him. It came to this, that to those dour

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Calvinistic Scotch small farmers little removed from the peasants working under them, who were as well educated, independent and free-spoken as their masters, and to the peasants themselves, their Commodore at his lodging in the Den could do no wrong.

In the forenoon the Commodore generally took his constitutional walk or ride or drive, sometimes as far as Kilcainrie, the seven-miles-distant town, where he had the only chance of calling at his and Neil's tailor's, at the bookseller's, at the tobacconist's where he bought his snuff, at the grocer's with Mrs Ord's orders written in her neat, old-fashioned hand, with her eccentric spelling, at the butcher's, if there had been any mistake in his cart's weekly delivery of meat, at the fish shop on a like errand. Fortunately the baker had not to be interviewed, for bread being the staff of life, and home-made bread in Scotland being confined to scones or bannocks and outcakes, there was sufficient demand for good old-fashioned loaf bread, not whitened by alum or raised by any uncanny powder in addition to honest yeast, to support a village baker whose trade was part of his name and identity — Rob Tamson, Geordie Tamson, Dave Tamson, might not have found him, but Baker Tamson hit the man like a nail struck on the head. Mrs Ord could not be too thankful for the comparative vicinity of Baker Tamson, since without him and his oven her cookery could never have risen with safety to the modest heights of pigeon and rabbit pies, "barred ashets" and "freshets."

If officers and gentlemen will take up their abodes in remote country places where a carrier is only a

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weekly visitor, they need not complain though they are made the family purveyor every time they are in the seven-miles-distant town. The Commodore never complained, but discharged his errands in the same dignifiedly, well-nigh solemnly taciturn fashion. And as to taking liberties with such a customer, whose orders were comically small to be so loftily conveyed, no tradesman was so far left to himself as to attempt it. The Commodore was waited upon with as much ceremony and deference as if his commissions half emptied the shops.

After his early dinner the Commodore again withdrew to his study, where we will not have the indiscretion to follow him—since it is just possible that even the most exciting paragraph in his newspaper, the jolliest discussion in *Blackwood's* "Noctes Ambrosianae" did not save him from an occasional nod in his uneasy armchair. And who would intrude on the shy, stiff Commodore in that least conventional of undresses—a forty-winks nap?

After the refreshment of Mrs Ord's tea, when the daylight was long, the Commodore would stroll out in the direction from which Neil, who was a day boarder at Pryde the schoolmaster's, would come riding home on his pony. Or Neil's father would saunter as far as the cotton and the Manse, encountering the day labourers and the women working in the fields, returning from hedging and ditching, or from setting potatoes or hoeing turnips. His rather small, deep-set eyes would give a blink, and he would "pass the weather" to each by name, blately but distinctly.

"A fine night, Sandy," "A cauld wind, Jean,"

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though not another word could he have fetched forth to save his life or theirs. Notwithstanding he knew as well as they did, for it was the gossip of the country side, and his ears were open while his mouth was shut, that Sandy's son had died of a decline the week before; and Jean was to be cried with the North Cairnie blacksmith the very next Sunday. Jean, who was the daughter and the image of another Jean whom he had helped with her lessons, thus saving her from "pawmies," and slidden with her—two sliders in the long queue of laddies and lassies on the slide of the season, the glittering silvery track on the brow of the brae opposite the Manse.

He could utter neither condolence nor congratulation, and it was an effort to him to say the short sentence he did say—but without question it was a gratification to him. As for the recipients of the brief greeting, inexplicable as it may sound, it warmed their hearts and they held their heads higher for it.

"Young Maister Alan that was, grown into a Commodore—no less—but as gleg as ever in kenning an auld acquaintance," the elderly man would reflect with pride and pleasure.

"And a fine gentleman like him—grey-headed to boot—to mind that I'm my mither's dochter and her namesake. I maun tell Willy and see if he doesna think it's a feather in my cap."

Entering by the ever-open Manse gate the Commodore would traverse the shrubbery, walk in at the door habitually open like the gate, take his way so quietly that he might have been a stealthy burglar, past the dining-room to the minister's study, and with a nod and an "Ay, to be sure," in

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dry rejoinder to the owner of the study's easy greeting, "So you're there, Alan," seat himself in the chair he was accustomed to take, and await the "crack" for which he had come. It was as nearly as possible one-sided, only a monosyllable or two or three words asking a question now and then, preventing it from being a monologue. For the Doctor, as loquacious as his brother was the reverse, would simply put down his pen with which he had been writing a sentence in his sermon, or in that additional parochial contribution to the statistical history of Scotland which did him so much credit, and would serve for a second edition of the valuable work. Resting his clasped hands on his knees, he would pour forth all that he had not recounted to the Commodore a couple of evenings before, of his personal and domestic annals in the interval—the letter he had sent to the local newspaper on the disorderly behaviour of certain visitors to the parish on the last Fast Day, of what had been discussed at the meeting of the Presbytery, of the rumour that young Hunter was to get Kinninmonth Kirk, of the flying visit of the Doctor's brother-in-law, Lossiemuir, of the fright his wife and he had got with Nelly—that she was in for whooping-cough, which, if it had not been a false alarm, would, more likely than not, have gone over the three youngest.

The clack ended, leaving the Doctor out of breath, and the form gone through of inquiring whether the Commodore would not "stop" for supper, the visitor departed without seeking to see his sister-in-law though he was on perfectly friendly terms with her. He left, escorted by the Doctor, his bald head bare, still

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talking glibly, as he walked, closing for the night the gate which was only an ornament by day, leaning over it when closed to watch the tall, gaunt figure, casting an exaggerated Don Quixote shadow in the sunset glow.

For the Commodore, the simplest of suppers followed—the supper which he had eaten as a boy, which an anchorite—in room of Mrs Ord and Neil—might have shared, the toasted fish, or the egg, the glass of buttermilk or of lightest beer. Immediately afterwards—not to keep Neil unduly out of bed—came the “worship” or “exercise,” in which Jenny from her kitchen and Bill from his loft joined, the chapter of the Bible read sonorously, with eyes never raised from his big book—one felt if he had lifted them and caught his neighbour’s eye, a faint blush would have risen on his thin, brown cheek—and a short prayer delivered “meekly kneeling on his knees,” with his company. Oddly enough that prayer was taken from the service in the English prayer-book read on Sundays on the high seas. Neither Mrs Ord, nor Jenny, nor Bill—Neil being too young to be supposed to have a voice in the matter—was a staunch enough Presbyterian to raise an objection. But if the Doctor had been within earshot, gentle and tolerant though he was, and inclined to look up to his elder twin brother, not so much because he firmly believed the Commodore to have been a Trojan in battle, as because his silence told upon the Doctor as it told upon other people, yet he would not have refrained from faithfully uttering his protest against the introduction of this thin wedge of black Prelacy.

Thus the Commodore’s day ended.

CHAPTER II

MADAM AT THE MANSE

TWO of the three persons to whom the Commodore's Den was free were in it just then, and if the third had been four-footed he might have been supposed to be included in the party, since the Newfoundland Hector was there. He was sitting on his haunches by his young master's side, lifting up a large, superhumanly sensible face, the great liquid brown eyes turned from the one speaker to the other, as if he were attentively listening to the conversation and weighing the arguments on each side.

But Neil, with his father's enthusiasm repressed instead of being expressed, had no outward influence to infect and fire him. He had not naturally that craving for the sea which often besets a boy who has led an entirely landward life. He had been delicate as a child, he was studiously inclined. He was at present the highly-vaunted head-boy of the parish school—Pryde, the schoolmaster, took credit for Neil's achievements.

His uncle at the Manse thought highly of his attainments, and had taken to remonstrating seriously with his brother on the throwing away of embryo scholarship, of which he would be guilty, if he sent the boy to sea to be knocked about middy fashion as

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he himself had been, and with no greater teaching than such as he could secure from a middy's schoolmaster. Possibly there could have been no more convincing proof of the Commodore's devotion to his son than his relinquishment of a cherished idea and adoption of Neil's views—views which would cost the Commodore much more for Neil's education, while at the same time any profession the boy chose, would be a less safe and certain provision for his future than that which his father had planned.

The two privileged persons were the boy Neil and his cousin, Marjorie of the Manse, a girl about two years younger.

Nobody questioned the fact of the Commodore's heart being set on his boy, though he had little more to say to him than he had to say to the world at large. It was unmistakable that his company was always welcome to his father though the exchange of confidences were all on the lad's side, while being a quiet lad in his turn, they were not so overpowering as a boy's chatter often is. They were there—the confidences—which was the important matter, and they were imparted to the man, whether they referred to a pocket knife with an extra number of blades, or to a wish to go to college now that Neil might be supposed to have exhausted the resources of the Rowanden schoolmaster. Scotch fathers and sons, with a commendable desire not to waste time, were wont to regard a mere schoolboy as he would have been regarded in other regions, as fit to be his own master and to enter on a college course. But even such a juvenile pursuit of scholarship had not entered into the Commodore's scheme for his son's career.

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He had designed Neil for his own profession, which was not the less dear to him because he had quitted it before he had won its highest prizes, and was not in the habit of expatiating on its superiority in his eyes.

Neil Menzies was a small boy for his age. His cousin Marjorie, two years his junior, was the same height. He had a pleasant, good-humoured rather than handsome face, though it had already some slight signs of that student abstraction which tempt boy and man to retire into himself, and is apt at once to mar his geniality and spoil his popularity. At the parish school, while he was looked up to as the dux boy who answered all the questions when his uncle, the Doctor, put the school through its paces, and though he was not without credit as an active player of shinty for his size, and because of his generosity in letting other boys have rides on his pony on strict conditions that they were not to use the whip or their shins to "Meg," he was rather a lonely boy. This was from no distinctions in rank—these did not exist for the old parish schools—but because of difference in nature.

His chief personal peculiarity was the extreme softness and silkiness of his brown hair, which had to be cut short indeed to prevent it falling in a wave across his forehead. He was ashamed of it, for it was like a lassie's hair. He would have much preferred to have shared the stubby heads of his school-fellows. This touch of effeminacy in his appearance, accentuated as it was by his lack of size and corresponding vigour, troubled Neil sufficiently to cause him to decline absolutely to wear, even on the most

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festive occasion, the ribbon which Mrs Ord would have had him slip under his broad, overlying white collar, while she would have tied the bow which would have completed the decoration. He was not at liberty to leave off the collar itself, but he was glad when it was of blue or red striped shirting and not of snowy linen, and he did his best to counter-balance the finer cloth of his jackets and trousers by taking no pains to conceal where they were worn threadbare, and faded to a whitey-brown at the wrists and ankles. He cultivated the manner and habit of thrusting his hands into his pockets until it became second nature to him, and when he drew out his handkerchief it was invariably a soiled ball with which, in spite of prohibitions, he had rubbed his slate previous to rubbing his rosy face. Its simple rosiness was another scandal to him. Why would it not get a brick red or a tanned brown like the other boys' faces?

Neil's cousin Marjorie was not so much a young girl as a little woman who had grown up not merely in the enjoyment of a free country life, but within the shadow of a pulpit and under the wing of her mother—the minister's wife. She was the high-minded queen of the parish, bound to be an example to all other wives and mothers within the bounds, to take the lead, lay down the law, and be as much of an authority in her own line as Dr Menzies was in his.

Marjorie reflected such a nurture. She was full of duties and obligations not only to her father and mother, and to the overflowing brood at the Manse, but to every solitary old man or woman or waif of a child in Rowanden. Inevitably her cares lent her an

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amount of sedateness for her years, but it was a sedateness shot through and through with such youthful buoyance that one felt if there had not been a subduing influence at work with Marjorie of the Manse, she would have had to encounter the danger of running riot as a hoyden. For she was an exceedingly healthy, happy child, quite able to bear her burden. She was well-grown, with a certain squareness and sturdiness of carriage and gait, which might become stateliness in later years. She was at once fairer and paler than her cousin Neil, with what was to herself a regrettable plentifulness of golden brown freckles, in the room of the brick red and the tan which the boy coveted. Her chestnut hair was in plaited loops tied up with brown ribands so as to serve the double purpose of keeping it out of the way, and preserving it in order—the complete attainment of this object filling Neil with envious disgust. Her clear bright eyes were chestnut too—rather chestnut than hazel—while her cousin's eyes were of the blue-grey tint which has the coolness of ocean waves, and implies depths as profound as sea caves can claim.

Marjorie of the Manse was dressed with great plainness and in materials not one whit better than those worn by the small farmers'—even the cottars'—daughters. What marked them out from the clothes of the other girls at the parish school, which the minister's daughter also attended along with a detachment of her younger brothers and sisters, was a nice, dainty cleanness and neatness; not a pearl button missing, not a hook out of place, which made her summer lilac gingham frocks—they were generally lilac, because

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lilac will stand continual washing better than any other colour will endure it—always look fresh out of the fold. Her merino frocks and tippets under her tartan mantle were equally immaculate in winter, for the very good reason that they were only worn unsheltered in public, the moment she returned home they were shrouded from head to heel in the blue and white checked cotton stuff of which children's pinafores were wont to be made. Even when Marjorie went through a form of dressing for tea (not dinner) her frock was protected by an apron with a bib of nankin or holland, embroidered in scarlet braid by Marjorie's own hands. On very grand occasions the apron was of spotted muslin finished by a morsel of edging out of Mrs Menzies' store of real lace. Though like many another Scotch minister's wife whose husband held a small living while his family was large, she had taken as straight a vow to poverty as ever St Francis took it, Mrs Menzies would no more have tolerated slovenliness and untidiness in anybody belonging to her, than she would have presented herself at table in curl papers, with her feet thrust into carpet slippers.

Mrs Menzies was the daughter of a laird with a good pedigree and a fair estate, and the sister of a laird similarly situated. And though she had thought fit to marry for love Dr Archibald Menzies, and to submit to his hiding his light under a bushel by not having sufficient worldly ambition to take measures to be transferred from Rowanden to a larger parish with a stipend more in keeping with his wants and those of his family, and a congregation better qualified to value his learning and eloquence, that

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was not to say that she was to forget what was due to him and to herself, and to every child belonging to them, from Marjorie to the infant in the cradle.

Though Marjorie of the Manse went to the parish school, walking the distance, in all save the worst of weather, like any other strong, hardy child, she did not keep the same hours as the rest of the young scholars for two reasons. The one was that her mother was necessarily better qualified to teach the accomplishments, what were then considered the fine finishing touches to a better-class girl's education—French, with a bearable British accent, the rudiments of Italian, music, fine needlework—than Adam Pryde could possibly be. And however multiform and binding her engagements, there was no question that Mrs Menzies would make time to impart to her daughter what she had herself received in an Edinburgh boarding-school, and that Marjorie would do her best to profit by her mother's instructions.

The second reason was that though the intelligent member of a church whose very name implied equality, and though sternly desirous to impress on Marjorie betimes the straitened means of the family, and the call upon her to be helpful all round, she did not wish her daughter to be longer than was necessary in the society which assembled in the parish school. There the "minister's man's" children and the young brothers and sisters of Bell, the single maid-servant at the Manse, were the minister's daughter's classmates.

Accordingly, it was only on half-holidays and on odd occasions that there was an opportunity for the cousins making common cause in practising "ride

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and tie," that is mounting alternately on Neil's pony, "Meg," until the roads to the Commodore's Lodgings and the cotton, kirk and Manse parted company, or in turning aside to ransack the quarry for blackberries and the neighbouring hedge for haws. The two were fast friends—all the more so, perhaps, that their meetings out of school were uncertain and precarious, and that Marjory's time was too valuable already to permit her to waste much of it on a boy older than herself, who should be able, therefore, to look after himself and to have no need of her attentions. But whoever overheard the conversation of the boy and girl when they were together would have found it was generally—

"What did you get for your dinner the day, Neil? And did you eat it up stoup and roup? Boys are so silly in only taking what they like. Mother says it is a sin to slight good food when there are so many starving folk in the world." Or, "Did you tell Uncle Alan or Mrs Ord that your shoes were pinching you? Oh! how foolish not to speak to them. Do you want your feet to get cramped till they grow deformed? I ken there is nobody to come after you and wear up the shoes, which is a great pity; but the feet are better worth than the shoes, Mother says that, whatever the article of dress may be which Simmie grows away from. If you forget again, Neil—one would think your toes would speak up fast enough—I'll come over on purpose to remind you and put an end to your wool-gathering. Father is a scholar, but he is not absent-minded like you; mother would not let him and I'm going to cure you while I'm about it.

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It was less often, "Will you help me with the count the Master has given me, Neil? It will not come out, and mother's forte is not counts—she says so herself. Father would show me, but mother says I'm not to plague him, for he has his proofs from the printer to correct, and the preachings are coming on, and he is to be away attending the meeting of the Synod." Or, "If I get as bad chilblains as Katie Pryde has, and cannot get my mud boots over my slippers, and if Meg has not been frosted that morning, will you and Benjie Peebles join hands and make a King's Cushion and come and carry me to the school, as Benjie and Katie's brother, Jeames, carry her round to the school door?"

In truth, Neil Menzies, was lost without a mother, with a taciturn father, with Mrs Ord—a singularly colourless woman who was grateful to the Commodore for what he did for her and tried to serve him in return, but was so cumbered by that small serving that she could not spare more than a mild regard—a little stronger than that experienced by the maid-of-all-work, Jenny, but not nearly so strong as that entertained by the ex-man-before-the-mast with his one leg, Bill—for the quiet boy in the house. His very quietness rendered him less interesting, while less troublesome than the ordinary genus of noisy, mischievous boy, getting in and out of endless scrapes, might have been. Neil would have fared considerably worse if he had not had his cousin Marjorie. His aunt at the Manse, with the incessant demands of her household and her numerous brood upon her, would, had the lad been in a serious strait, scandalously neglected or dangerously ill, have

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interposed on his behalf and nursed him night and day. His uncle, drawn to him by a similarity of abilities and tastes, would not have seen Neil suffer—indeed, he had already interposed to prevent him being sent to sea; but, like his wife, he was busy every hour of the lawful day, and he was chary of meddling more than he could avoid in what was really the Commodore's business. In short, Neil was sufficiently well off to be left to Marjorie—and it was a perception of what Marjorie was to the boy in her old-fashioned propensity to help mother, sister, schoolmate, which had caused the Commodore, from the earliest years of the pair, to make an exception in the little girl's favour, to pronounce "Open Sesame" where his den was concerned.

The end which ensued was that Marjorie of the Manse came to feel herself accountable for her uncle as well as for her cousin, and all the other helpless people in her father's parish whom she could possibly compass. The Commodore's silence and his martial rather than naval bearing had no terrors for her, from the time she could trot about and lisp short words and misapply long ones. She spoke to him more freely than Neil spoke, she picked up his spectacles unasked, and lugged a stool from the sitting-room, being so bent on his putting his feet upon it that he was fain to comply. She brought him, of her own accord, in her daisy basket, the first handful of ripe gooseberries from her own gooseberry bush, and, though he was careful of his digestion in what he ate out of season, and did not care for gooseberries, he ate these for her gratification. When he had a cold and declined every solace Mrs Ord ventured to

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suggest, he swallowed the gruel—Marjorie would not let the housekeeper alone till she had concocted it—the child carrying the basin covered with a towel, between her small hands, proudly bidding him note that she had not spilt a drop, and assuring him,—

“This is the way we take it, Uncle Alan, and you must not wait a minute lest it get cold.”

When she was older and he was plagued with the increasing weakness of his eyes, and his not having glasses to suit them, she took the matter into her own guidance

“You must not read another word. I will read to you for the half-hour mother can spare me, and by that time Neil will have finished his lessons and will take my place.”

The Commodore had not been so cared for by a woman—not even by the young wife who had died when Neil was born—no, not since he was a boy minded by his mother in that same old Manse of Rowanden. Marjorie possessed him as no other person in the world did, save his son, and Neil being a boy, and Marjorie a girl, her possession was the more active and demonstrative of the two.

“I am going down the water with Hector to let him get a swim” (“soom” he called it, promising scholar though he was) “and a hunt at the water rats. Will you come too, Margie?” for it was a half-holiday.

She shook her head with longing reluctance, stooping to put her arms round the shaggy neck of the dog and to hug him, while he, as if in response to the caress, or in anticipation of the joys awaiting him, thumped the floor with his bushy tail.

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"I would like it fine," she said, standing up in her straight, clean lilac frock, her rustic straw cottage bonnet trimmed with a yard of the same gingham, expended in hemmed strings tied in a broad bow beneath her chin, and a deep frill or "toy" to protect her neck from the sun, the trimming capable of being stripped off and washed with the frocks, "but two of the elders, Mr Swinton and Tammas Alvas, are coming in to supper to-night and I'm to help mother and Bell with Simmie and the rest, to get them to say their lessons and go to bed, that Bell may lay the table, and mother may sit still and entertain the gentlemen."

"Do you call Tammas Alvas that, him that makes the laddies' peeries, and the ploughmen's caps, and the wives kirns?" asked Neil with a suspicion of irony.

Marjorie drew herself up and looked him full in the face.

"They are all gentlemen that come to the Manse, Neil," she said with a touch of her mother's severity.

The Commodore had been sitting with his elbow on the arm of his chair, and his head on his hand, apparently not heeding them, but he looked up at her words and said,—

"Right, Marjorie," with approval not the less emphatic that it was laconic.

"I have been over at Dunbreck," explained Marjorie, "to see if anything was wrong since none of them were at church on Sunday, but it was only that Lizzie had heard that her good-daughter, who is always ailing, was worse than usual, and had gone over to Brigend to see if she could do anything for her, and Jeames had to stay at home to take care of

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Granny and wee Peggy. I just ran up the brae to see if you were done with the last *Blackwood*, sir. Father likes to have a look at it, and mother reads what she calls "the lighter articles," and if she thinks there is a story fit for me, she lets me have my turn."

The *Blackwood* was handed over to the petitioner. Then Neil proposed,—

"If you like I'll give you a convoy—me and Hector will—back to the Manse before we go down to the Cairnie."

"Very well, come then," agreed Marjorie.

The Manse of Rowanden was not so ancient as the church, it was comparatively modern, while it was quite as large. It had been built at a time when the successors of Knox and Melville were still for the most part lairds' sons who had private patrimonies to add to their stipends. The ministers lived in a style not unlike that of their fathers and brothers. This accounts for the fact that these manses, especially if they were in the country, were substantial, spacious country houses, the glebe lands attached to the livings affording room and material for pleasant garden grounds, masking the farm offices in the background, until there was little to distinguish the minister's house from that of his kinsman, the lord of the manor. Times were changing, the ministers were less and less frequently drawn from the country gentry class whose sons had lived to see that neither wealth nor rank was to be won in the sacred profession, that unless they went into it from the higher motives which set at naught worldly ambition, it was idle to think that they could secure the power dear to men's hearts, the social influence and political

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importance which had been possessed by the fathers of the Church. The manses, comfortable and agreeable residences as they presented themselves, began to be somewhat of a burden and a drain on the less refined habits and the more straitened means of their occupants. In these circumstances the houses were suffered to fall into partial neglect, and no longer served to assert the dignity of the ministerial calling, the gentle descent of the minister, and the learning dear to the Scotch imagination, no less than the piety which belonged to his vocation.

There was no such evidence of sinking in the social scale in connection with the Manse of Rowanden, though Mrs Menzies had brought more of a pedigree than of a fortune to her husband (unless, indeed, she was a fortune in herself), and each of the numerous children she had borne to the minister was to be a veritable olive branch of peace and plenty

The Doctor himself, worthy man, though he had a double love as he seemed to have a double right to his home because it had been his father's before him, might have been sometimes tempted to let the paths grow more rough, the grass on the various "greens" or lawns—the Dial Green, the Washing Green, the "Bee-Skep" Green—be more unkempt, the trees and shrubs not so carefully trimmed, the flower-beds wanting renewal. He might have concentrated the time and work of his man and halfin boy on the vegetable garden, the offices and their tenants of a cow and a calf, a gig horse, a cart horse and their foals, pigs and poultry, the strips of hay, turnips and barley which constituted the glebe

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as the man's master reflected a little anxiously and sadly on the increased expense of living since his father's day, on the future of his boys and girls—of whom Marjorie was the eldest—of how they were to be launched into the world and what would be their respective fates

But to Mrs Menzies the Manse with its traditional dignity was her compensation for many a fatigue and hardship. She would work as hard as her single maid-servant without a murmur, without dreaming of counting it a degradation so long as it lay in the path of duty, and her earthly reward was that she had her pretty drawing-room, in which she could spend her few minutes of leisure, as when she was the laird's daughter at Lossiemuir, she had her avenue winding through the belt of shrubbery, up which at rare intervals an old acquaintance's phaeton would drive. Withal she was a deeply religious woman of the stuff martyrs are made. She had tried at first to combat her husband's supineness in seeking promotion, his content to live and die at Rowanden. When she found his passive resistance too much for her, she believed that his call must be to his little better than peasant parishioners, and submitted, as his true helpmate, to a life of obscurity and toil, with wonderful grace. She had exceptional gifts of organising and managing which were calculated to pull the family through whatever further difficulties they had to encounter. There was something indomitable about her. On the other hand, it would probably have been asking more than was human from her, that she should fail to show how entirely she understood the degree to

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which the husband she loved and honoured was indebted to her, for bearing the heavier end of their joint obligations, how dependent he was upon her, how badly he would fare without her support.

In some respects her daily life was a protracted martyrdom of incessant work and unrelieved self-denial, and she took it up and carried it gallantly without passionate revolt, or weak threat of frantically throwing it up, or of sullenly letting it slip through her hands. It would have been to ask her to be as an angel in Heaven if, while holding that martyrdom for the faith which was in her to be the noblest lot on earth, she had made no sign, betrayed no token that she was sensible she was a willing martyr. Yet it lent an apologetic air to her husband's bearing towards her, and his dealings where she was concerned. He was not weak though he was gentle and accessible. Not the Commodore himself could be more adamant in his silence than the Doctor could be in the resolution round which his easy play of talk flowed, like the ripples of a summer sea on an impregnable rock.

But how could he contradict—or even argue persistently with—the woman who had the root of the matter in her so that he need not seriously fear for her, who had somewhat stooped to him without so much as admitting to herself—not to say to himself or to the world—that she had stooped, who had done and was doing so much for him and his without counting the cost. Her sisters had married from Lossiemuir, lairds such as their own father, or well-to-do professional men, and it warmed his

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heart to know that she would not have changed her lot with theirs. Neither, modest man though he was, could he truthfully say that any one of their husbands was a better man or truer gentleman than he was, while Rowanden Manse, thanks to Mrs Menzies, was a match to their dwellings. But did it not behove him to reckon up the price? They-^{led} easy, enjoyable lives with their husbands' ample incomes, their complements of servants, their visits here and there. When did they show a solitary servant, a worker taken from the fields, a mere learner, how to scrub floors and black grates as Mrs Menzies had shown Bell? Which of them—far less fine-looking women in their handsome toilets than his wife had been in her day, than she was still in the ascetic plainness which she decreed for herself as well as for the children—could have alternated with Bell in her place at the wash-tub, and still remained so unquestionably the mistress, the lady, that the last thing Bell would dream of doing would be to address a forward or disrespectful word to her fellow-worker. And when there was a breathing space and Bell could sit down and rest for five minutes in her kitchen, Mrs Menzies, with her hands withered, scored and hardened, would be pointing out Marjorie's place in her music-book and directing her fingers over the ivory and ebony keys, or she would be at her everlasting sewing, and at the same time putting Duncan through his letters and hearing Nelly and Hughie their spelling and their grammar.

It was her own arrangement that she should prepare the bairns—laddies and lassies alike—for

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the Master till the laddies got the length of Latin grammar, and of Euclid and Algebra, the Doctor told himself, which sounded a fair enough division of labour. "For, what with Charlie and Hughie and Duncan and Simmie, when they all came on with Greek to follow the Latin if they take the humanities as their father's sons are bound to do, ay, and the Hebrew if one or more has a call to the ministry, I would need to be a late sitter or an early riser to accomplish all my work."

But on second thoughts his conclusion was, "I'm feared I've been playing tricks with my conscience and with Mary. Charlie will be out in the world and doing for himself—let us trust—long before Duncan or even Simmie have gotten the length of the Shorter Catechism and the Auld Testament—I doubt I've been but shirking the evil day for I never had any turn in the dominie line. And now what does that woman do? Because Hughie is starting the Latin, and Charlie is beginning Greek, she would have me teach her the rudiments of the Latin that she might spare me knocking them into Hughie and his younger brother, and leave me time to go over my lectures on the Acts afresh, since there has been some suggestion of their publication. Na, na, my lady, I must be on my guard against you henceforth."

CHAPTER III

THE SCHOOLHOUSE

ADAM PRYDE, the parish schoolmaster, session clerk and ruling elder of Rowanden, was a University bred man like Dr Menzies himself, and, naturally, in that parish of small farmers and hinds with a mechanic or two—since the very medical men and “writers” who gave Rowanden the benefits of physic and law, dwelt as far off as Kilcairnie, was second to the minister in social influence and authority. For the Commodore—looked up to as he was—happened to be sufficiently a foreign element in the place not to come into competition with the Master.

The time had been when Pryde had looked forward to being the first and not the second man in a parish, “to wag his head in a poopit!” that honourable ambition of the clever sons of the soil in Scotland. Pryde was not actually peasant born, he was the son of a small tradesman in Kilcairnie, perhaps of the two origins rather the worse for Church preferment, at a date when patronage held undisputed sway in the disposal of Church livings. The only chances for Adam Pryde would have been to have gone as tutor into a county family which held the key to at least one parish, and to have so won the favour of the patron in possession as to be

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presented to the kirk and manse in question. The other was to have been so gifted with talents and zeal as to have taken patron and people alike by storm. Adam Pryde failed in both requirements. He did go as a tutor into the house of one of the gentry and was there licked into shape, but being a bumptious youth of unaccommodating principles and opinions he did not succeed in so recommending himself to his employer, as to be rewarded by the plum he had to bestow. On the other hand, the matter and manner of his sermons were too cut and dry, too pedantically academical to arouse enthusiasm in his hearers. It was not that Pryde was without talents of a smart, sharp kind, or that he was not as honest as he was orthodox in his religious convictions, still less had he the misfortune to be dogged with that absence of self-confidence which has been so often the treacherous rock on which "sticket ministers" have been wrecked. He was a confident man with the high, tapering head of self-esteem and the imperious carriage—though he was no bigger in length and breadth than the Doctor—of an autocrat. And an autocrat he was in his pepper-and-salt tweed suit at his desk in the parish schoolroom, though his sceptre might be no more than a mahogany ruler, and his sentences of punishment not exceeding so many strokes of the tawse, a couple of hours' solitary confinement when the school had "scailed" and the rest of the scholars were gone, or the Book of Job to be copied out, or the hundred and nineteenth Psalm to be repeated by heart at two summons, and his subjects were only the headstrong or timid, hardly responsible boys and girls of Rowanden.

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Adam was by no means destitute of common sense, so that he speedily reconciled himself to being second best—the dominie and not the minister. He had the consolation of knowing that his struggles in acquiring a college education had raised him in the world inasmuch as a well-accredited schoolmaster ranks before the keeper of a small tinware shop any day. He had his salary and his perquisites as the Doctor had his, the schoolmaster's schoolhouse as a pendant to the minister's manse—even a minute annuity to the schoolmaster's widow to match, in due proportion, the lilliputian annuity secured for the relict of, the minister—all in a beautiful sequence which did honour to the social sliding scale as it was recognised by John Knox and his fellows. True, there was an order of diminution in everything, in dignity and in payment, only the drudgery of the dominie in the long hours spent in the crowded babble of the schoolroom, were a heavier tax on physical endurance though they might not imply a greater amount of brainwork than what was exercised in half the time spent in what Mrs Menzies took care should be the peaceful retirement of the minister's study, even in the many-childed Manse of Rowanden. And as it chanced in the present examples, though the minister's salary was considerably higher than the Master's, and though the Manse was an imposing country house compared to the schoolhouse—since no laird's son in the palmiest days of the parish churches had ever descended to be the parish schoolmaster—Adam Pryde was a richer man than Archibald Menzies. The decidedly bare farmhouse-like schoolhouse, with the equally bare barn of a school

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—architecture in its ugliest utilitarian guise—and a vegetable garden with a scanty allowance of flowers and fruit to bear it company, was still in every detail of its housekeeping far less ascetic than was the Manse. The Master had fewer calls on his liberality and charity than beset the minister. Pryde had supplements to his income which Dr Menzies did not possess, and in the matter of children there were only a boy and a girl of the Prydes' at the schoolhouse, while there were four boys and two girls at the Manse. If Dr Menzies were king in the pulpit, the Master was "king in Kippen," that is behind his desk in the school. Adam Pryde's voice was as loud as the minister's in the kirk-session—the kirk-session being a democratic institution, and Dr Menzies having little taste for ruling in what was the secular business of the parish.

It was not in the Doctor's nature to forget that the schoolmaster was an educated man like himself, that they had sat in the same classes in Edinburgh University, because Adam Pryde's ultimate position was inferior to that of the other man. So, though there was not the affectionately-intimate relations between them which often in those days, as in earlier days, existed between the parish minister and the parish schoolmaster, simply because the men's dispositions were different; for that very reason Dr Menzies was scrupulously considerate of Pryde. Indeed, both the men held each other in mutual respect notwithstanding the fact that Pryde, trading on the circumstance that the two were contemporaries and had been classmates, would talk of the Doctor behind his back in the familiar light of "my friend Archie,"—"that good

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chield, Menzies" as if the two were on the most intimate footing, which he would not have done if he had been the gentleman Dr Menzies was.

Mrs Pryde was not as resigned to the situation as her husband was, though she had risen in the world, much as her husband had risen and in company with him. She had been a small tradesman's daughter as he had been a small tradesman's son, and having been pretty and smart she had served for a time in the principal draper's shop in Kilcainie, an opening which had done for her what her husband's tutoring had accomplished for him, got rid of such bashful uncouthness as had beset them. She was not actually an ill-disposed or ill-natured woman, but she had a craving for precedence. To fill a subordinate place with a good grace is frequently as hard a feat as to rule graciously. And as Mrs Pryde was stupid and vulgar-minded, she had a low conception of what constituted superiority. She would not have been slow in owning that Dr and Mrs Menzies, as the minister and the minister's wife, were a step above Pryde and herself, as the schoolmaster and the schoolmaster's wife, if only the minister's stipend had been three times as large as it was, or if the Menzies had inherited private means. But to live in a hand-to-mouth struggle with poverty as the Manse family did—Mrs Menzies with her one servant and her six children—Marjorie's mother and Marjorie's self to be dressed in the plainest of linens, cottons and woollens—the most simply trimmed even of best bonnets, the most puritanically unadorned of white net caps—a girlish throat without a necklace, and a work-worn hand on ordinary occasions without any ring save a marriage

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ring, and yet to arrogate to themselves, or to have freely bestowed by their neighbours, the respect and consideration accorded to the parish's upper ten, was what Mrs Pryde could not comprehend. Social superiority meant to her more or less of fine clothes, dainty food, ease and idleness; for she had not reached the stage where intellectual culture came in for the women as well as the men of the family, while she was proud of what she regarded as her husband's learning.

Mrs Pryde did her best according to her light to elevate herself and her young daughter, Katie, in the social scale, by spending as much money as the Master would give her for silk pelisses to be worn by her and her daughter on Sundays, and for tucked and frilled, puffed and pleated productions of the second-best dressmaker in Kilcairnie for every-day attire, so that even their work-a-day garments should be in the fashion and widely removed from the dress of the women and children around them. But the drawback was that these elaborate examples of fourth-class dressmaking, whether they were made of flimsy woollen material or of a modern variation on the old aristocratic chintzes, their composition and construction did not adapt them for frequent visits to the wash-tub, so that as often as not Katie, an indulged, wayward girl, and Mrs Pryde herself appeared in public in soiled, dishevelled plumes. They were plumes in one sense. Mrs Pryde went so far as to have a black feather for Katie's beaver in winter, and a straw-coloured feather for her Tuscan straw in summer; while Mrs Pryde's own velvet and lace bonnets according to the season were so loaded with

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clusters of auricula and bunches of roses, as to warrant a homely critic in declaring—that if the flowers had been real there was enough of them “to have suppered a coo.” Katie had a coral necklace, an amber necklace, a blue bead necklace, while garnet, cornelian and cairngorm rings made gay Mrs Pryde’s fat fingers grown white and soft nowadays. For she could not see what she and Pryde wanted with a servant, if she was not to smart her fingers and do all the work of the house, leaving Mrs Pryde of an afternoon to loll on the large horse-hair covered sofa in the one sitting-room—for the schoolhouse was by no means so spacious as the Manse—taking a snooze or listening to Katie’s practising scales. These were set her by a Kilcairnie music-mistress who travelled the distance from the town twice a week, to give the girl the music lesson on the second-hand piano—on which Mrs Pryde set great store. If the piano and Katie’s music lessons—upon the punctual performance of which Katie’s mother insisted, she cared for nothing else. She was continually begging off Katie on small pretences from one or other of her father’s classes, in which she might have excelled for she was a clever child, but did not choose to attend—not even though her father was the Master and wielded the ruler and the tawse, and when he was sufficiently roused, resented the fact that a child of his should affront him by either shirking her lessons, or by resigning herself to be the dunce of the class.

But arithmetic, geography—even handwriting, in which the school afforded a high example—had very little weight with Mrs Pryde. Why, she herself in her shop days had been quick enough at addition and

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subtraction ; geography she regarded as a useless attainment, and any cowherd under the Master's able tuition could not only write a legible hand, he could improve upon it by sundry elaborate flourishes. Mrs Pryde had a notion that it was more genteel to be rather behind with these common branches in order to devote more time to so ornamental a department as that of music.

What really baffled and galled Mrs Pryde was that Mrs Menzies, with so few of the advantages which Mrs Pryde could prize, and so many of the disadvantages which were also very patent to the Master's wife, yet remained entirely apart from her, as far removed as if she had been a rich woman luxuriating in all the privileges of wealth and an accredited superior station.

Mrs Menzies was perfectly unconscious of the effect which she in the circumstances produced on Mrs Pryde, or the rankling offence which the one woman was to the other. Indeed, Mrs Menzies had little time or attention to spare for the mistress of the schoolhouse. She knew they had nothing in common, and took it for granted that they were much in the same relation to each other that Mrs Menzies was to the small farmers' wives who wore black net caps, knitted shawls and black merino aprons of an afternoon, and beneath the black net caps ringlets in curl-papers every day of the week except Sunday, when the ringlets came out in a state of corkscrew frizziness. It might be culpably unobservant of Mrs Menzies, but it was a fact and not a pretence that, caring little for dress and similar distinctions on her own account, she was blind to

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what was glaringly conspicuous to Mrs Pryde, namely, the gulf in appearance and habits between that person and the homely farmers' wives in question. Mrs Menzies had not the least intention of slighting Mrs Pryde or of giving rise to chronic grievance where she was concerned. Both Mrs Menzies' good breeding and the sincerity of her religion would have forbidden such conduct on her part. She sought to be civil and well affected to all her husband's parishioners, so as to be able to come to their assistance if they were ever in any strait in which she could be of service to them. But she was terribly, preoccupied and engrossed with the near and pressing claims upon her, and a certain reserve, which was part of her nature, tended to increase the distance between her and the outer circle with which she had to do. If she preferred the Master to his wife, it was simply because of the educated intelligence which made a bridge between them, a bridge that unluckily could not exist in connection with her and Mrs Pryde. It was wide of the mark in Mrs Pryde to wax bitter and call her minister's wife "a proud peat, an upsetting beggar with no right or title to the airs she assumed." The Doctor was all very well with a pleasant word for everybody, ready to stay and listen to your stories and give you his in return, every time you foregathered. But his lady, as she supposed the haughty wife called herself, must be a sore drag upon him, and an injury to the favour in which he himself would have been held.

The school was over for the day and the Pryde family were gathered for the evening meal. It was the

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chief meal when work was over, and even the Master relaxed into slippered ease. He was wont to say his mid-day dinner was no more than a snack, he had still so much to see to, and to think of—laggards and transgressors “kept in” sullenly to execute the tasks which ought to have been done in the morning hours, the afternoon’s duties to be prepared for, etc. Even his cup of tea about the time the school closed the Master drank standing, there were still the copies to set, the quill pens to mend, the exercises to correct, details in which Adam Pryde, apart from his erudition, was a martinet.

But at early supper he could afford to stretch out his legs, lean back his head, taste the full relish of the morsel between his teeth, and be affable to those lesser lights—the wife and the bairns—before he wound up the cherished hour with a tumbler of toddy and the newspaper, or a book other than a school book. Then the remaining members of the family were expected either to retire for the night, or at least to respect the Master’s studies by subsiding into a considerate silence while they followed their own devices.

Mrs Pryde was a little doubtful of the propriety of this early supper. If it had been called dinner there would have been a difference, but then nobody dined later than four, even when they had company, within the bounds of Rowanden—an innovation so much as the change of name was not admissible. Besides, Mrs Pryde felt that she could not have the face to call the nondescript meal a dinner, although it was plentiful, and even included luxuries on occasions, it was decidedly irregular. Katie’s barley porridge, for

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which she had a passing fancy, was side by side with a pigeon or rabbit pie, or a dish of trout from the Cairnie Water which the boys Jeames and Benjie had caught since sundown, or a boiled salt, or a rizzered red herring, which the Master liked quite as well as the trout. As for the new potatoes which asked for a rasher of bacon to bring out their flavour, they were put out of countenance by the currant loaf which, like the barley porridge, was a perquisite of Katie's.

The Master was under the middle-size, with fiery red hair standing up like a brush on the high tapering head whose upland region was associated with self-esteem prominently developed. He was both brisk and brusque, with the tendency to be dictatorial and domineering, which is to be expected from a schoolmaster who is not one of a cluster of schoolmasters. (They naturally hold each other in check.) Now and then a dash of pedantry lent an old-fashioned pomposity to his talk, but as he was really a clever, well-informed man, this occurred less often than might have been feared. The least agreeable peculiarity he possessed was a propensity to "heckle" or cross-question his companions on their doings, which might be instructive and entertaining to himself, but was not always acceptable to the persons to whom it was addressed.

CHAPTER IV

THE MASTER'S GIFT OF "HECKLING"

HE began with his better-half.

"Mrs Pryde, mem," he said with mock deference, "and did you go over to New Byres," naming the nearest farmhouse, "and get the setting of eggs you were wanting to put below your brown 'tappie'? Katie there will take the sitting in hand, I daresay, and so be qualifying herself to be the gudewife of a farm town one of these days."

The Master's speech was *malapropos* all round, Master though he was, and that not entirely without design. He was a good husband and a good father, but he found a sly pleasure in rallying his folk, in all innocence as it sounded, on some patent weakness of theirs, on what was termed "a nick in their necks," and on playing on the nick. He had a shrewd guess that the much-talked-of walk to New Byres would have been again deferred, since Mrs Pryde hated walking, and now that she had grown stout, knew by experience that the exercise would be doubly fatiguing.

As to her daughter Katie's taking the lead in the transaction referred to, she was a nervous girl to whom a hen, in the mingled daze and frenzy of brooding, was a terror; while the prospect of being the gudewife of one of the neighbouring farms,

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where the farmer held the plough, suppered the horses, turned out and brought in the "kye" when the herd was absent on an errand, and smelt habitually of the stable and the byre, no prospect could have been more odious to her.

Mrs Pryde, comely still, though her figure was overgrown and her pretty face blowsy, stiffened her head where she sat at the head of the table. But it was the case of her daughter, reddening all over and pettishly jerking her shoulders, which the mother took up and not her own that she defended. It was for Katie's ruffled dignity that Mrs Pryde protested indignantly.

"Papa," she clung to the childish, effeminately genteel title, which it is to be feared she pronounced "papaw," with the emphasis on the last syllable, "I wonder at you. I'm sure you ken that if there is a living creature she cannot abide and would run from like the wind, it is a clocking hen next to a bubbly-jock. I mind when she was a wee thing and we had a hen going with birds in the yard, the bairn somehow angered the hen bird and it flew on her bit back—I thought she would have fallen into convulsions"

"The more fule you, Katie," said her father, cheerfully. "If you had stood your ground and given her a shoo she would soon have left off pecking you. It might have been too much to expect of a bairn, but a big lassie like you not to be able to say 'Bo' to a goose or a hen, which is much the same thing, unless that feint a hen among them, since hens were created, has had the credit of saving a city's capitol. If I were you I would be ashamed of such folly."

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"Folly indeed!" exclaimed Mrs Pryde with something like a snort. "I would like to learn whose is the worst folly, and whether you should not take shame to yourself, Adam Pryde, a man of your years and a schoolmaster forby, who ought to be an example to all the young people he has had under his charge, to liken a young miss like your daughter, Katie, to marriage at her tender years. And marriage with a young lout in every-day corduroys, since, if she is ever to stoop to be gudewife of a farm, it must needs be by marrying a farmer, and I suppose you would not propose her to wed with a greybeard past work, fain to sit by the ingle-neuk in the swallow-tailed blue coat which used to lie in the kist from Sunday to Sunday."

The two lads, Jeames and Benjie, kicked each other's shins vigorously under the table and sniggered *sotto voce*. Katie looked on the eve of bursting into a flood of tears.

The Master was a trifle put out. He might tease, but he had no wish to hurt anyone—least of all anyone belonging to him. And Lizzie Annie was right—trust a woman for having a quick eye to the proprieties—it did not become him to crack jokes which had to do with love and marriage, between representatives of the opposite sexes—not though the representatives were no better nor bigger than laddies in jackets and lassies in short frocks. He would have the laddies sending the lassies valentines, and the lasses consenting to keep trysts next, if he did not take care.

"Hout, tout," he said, trying to change the subject, "I was only entering my objection to you, Lizzie

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Annie, and you, Katie, becoming such fine ladies that I could hardly pretend to know you, while it could not be looked for that you should condescend to notice me and Jeames and Benjie there. Speaking of ladies," he added, quickly perceiving an opportunity to turn the conversation and yet to carry the interest of the feminine part of his audience with him, "Sandy Finlay, the carrier, told me he passed Mrs Menzies walking the whole distance back and fore to Kilcarnie, because my friend, Archie, had the gig and the horse to carry him to an auld friend's funeral up in the Tullymet direction. And one of the Manse bairns was ailing, and the medicine the doctor had ordered was not sent. Sandy was in great doubt whether he was not taking too much upon him to offer her a lift in the cart. But rain was threatening and he could not think of a woman—not to say a lady—exposed to it and him not to offer shelter and a seat, if it were but in a covered cart. He did not think she took it amiss, for she thanked him most civilly, and showed him that she had an umbrella and wore a cloak, and said she did not mind the walk, and she believed the sky was clearing, which it did."

"Just like her," put in Mrs Pryde with a spiteful snap of her ordinarily full, complacent lips, "she can do anything—tramp like a tinker's wife, and who is to say 'straw' to her who is the lady of the Manse? And according to you and Sandy Finlay she controls the very weather."

"Useful accomplishments," remarked the Master, impartially. "I declare, woman, you're guilty of what is little short of Mrs Menzies-phobia, and she

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never spending an ill wish on you. I hope you do not extend it to Marjorie of the Manse, for she is one of my best scholars on whom I depend to do me credit. She is coming on fine with her history. She is not so quick and bright as her cousin Neil, who darts at the heart of a subject and masters it in no time, but she's steady and sensible and has a kind of breadth of comprehension for a lassie, and when she grips a point, holds it fast and does not let it go. Bless you! she is not feared at a goose or a hen. I saw her the other day coming down the long Loan when one of the West Byres horses and a couple of colts were racing up where there was scant room for them to pass her. Instead of skreechin' and running before them like mad—which would have sent them off worse than ever—as nineteen lassies out of twenty, ay, and some lads, too," with a comical glance at Jeames and Benjie, "would have done, she stood still, flattened herself against the hedge and let them go by. She was a trifle white about the gills when I came up to her, but she could smile and had breath to say, 'They've done me no harm Mr Pryde. I think it must be true what people say, that horses will not put their hoofs upon you if they can help it, they leave that to clumsy cattle.'"

"Well, Mr Pryde, if you can admire a bold randy—"

"Marjorie of the Manse is not a randy," broke in Katie, impetuously. "I wish I could sit as long still, and keep myself as neat as she does. She never tears her frocks or bashes her bonnets, or gives a fiddle to others in the class that she will leap across

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a dub, without wetting her shoes, and falls in the middle where it is deepest and splashes herself with dirty water from head to foot."

"Well done, Katie." Her father drummed upon the table to call attention to his daughter. "It is a grand thing to be fair, seeing that Marjorie of the Manse beats you to sticks, when you stand up to parse or to write down one of my sentences on the blackboard."

Katie hung her head at the approbation with which her defence of her classmate had been received, as if it had been bestowed on false premises.

"For all that," she was moved to say, "Marjorie of the Manse and me are not great friends. She's too eydent and set on being in the right. It is tiresome and affronting."

"A fault so clean out of the common," said the Master, drily, "that it might even have been mistaken for a virtue."

Katie was silent, but she glanced up rebelliously at her father. She left her mother to cry out impatiently,—

"And if Marjorie Menzies does beat our Katie there at the parsing and the blackboard, I would like to hear which beats the other on the piannyfort. Miss Nairn has heard your nonsuch at the Manse play, and she says though Madam learns her regular, she cannot hold the candle to Katie there—not to make her proud. But I'm surprised at you, Adam Pryde, that you should be smothering the credit of your own flesh and bluid."

"When Katie sets the Cairnie on fire with her

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music, I'll engage to dance the Highland fling to it," promised the impenitent man.

"I don't want anybody to dance to my music," complained Katie, "I only want to be let alone."

"So you shall be, Miss Dorts," declared her father turning his back upon her; but before the ready tears could start to the violet blue eyes he had relented and was patting her on the shoulder. "You must learn to take a joke, my dear," he was telling her with rough kindness.

"And you must learn to be more tactful in your jokes," Mrs Pryde turned the tables upon him reproachfully; "you men are all alike, you never know when to stop."

Katie Pryde was of a different type from her mother, both physically and mentally. Her girlish beauty was of a slender, delicate order, she was excitable and sensitive, did not always know what she would be at, and when she did know, and had attained her object, as often as not spoiled the situation and threw away her prize out of sheer perversity.

"You are ready for to-morrow's school, Jeames?" the Master turned to his son.

Happily Jeames was ready, and he was so much to be depended upon for being prepared, that he felt inclined to resent the inquiry. He was a solid lad a year older than Neil. He already acted as assistant to his father with the younger scholars, and was familiarly known in the school as "the little Master." He was not a gifted boy though he had a fair amount of brains, but with regard to what has been styled his solidity—his soundness in the information he had ac-

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quired, his discretion beyond his years—some of this was due to temperament and a good deal to his father's influence, he was unapproachable. The Master was aware of this and was disposed to take satisfaction in the useful, creditable man he was developing out of the slightly dull boy. But no parental infatuation dimmed Pryde's shrewd reckoning of what his son was fit for. Jeames would make a good usher—as a young man in the position he was being reared for was termed in England—and an assistant to his father; with longer training and a session or two at the Edinburgh or Glasgow University he might be counted upon as his father's successor, in a post which Adam Pryde would have been the last man not to hold alike honourable, and within bounds fairly comfortable. It was about the utmost that Jeames had any title to expect. For anything else Jeames was a forlorn hope, since his father, undoubtedly a sharper, abler man than Jeames, had not risen to be in the ministry, in spite of his long preparation, his tutoring with its polish, and the circumstance that he was a full-blown licensed probationer who had preached on occasions for ministers who were sick or set aside by any dispensation of Providence. He had filled the Doctor's pulpit more than once or twice that year when Dr Menzies was laid up with lumbago, and that other year when he went to London to meet his twin brother, the Commodore, on his retirement from the service, after upwards of forty years of life on shipboard. But this was not to say that Jeames would not be pretty well off, following in his father's footsteps in the calling for which he was qualified. The dominie had sufficient sense and modesty on his

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son's account to be more than resigned to such a fate for him, seeing that Jeames was just a wee slow and thick-headed, but nothing to signify in an institution where he would have no rival to compete with him. Mrs Pryde did not share in her husband's content, she had been bent on her children's rising in the world as she and their father had risen, and Jeames's standing still and remaining in life where he had started was a keen mortification to her. She was impatient with the author of the mortification.

In truth there was nothing very interesting or attractive about Jeames at this stage of his existence. His bodily presence did not redeem his mental mediocrity, granting that it was mediocrity cultivated for a purpose. He was red-headed like his father, the same common caste of features without his father's confidence and briskness, which formed not a bad substitute for dignity. He was apt to be appallingly matter-of-fact and to show himself amazed when any one rebelled against the dire matter-of-factness. He was short and stout for his hobble-de-hoy age, which rendered his movements doubly clumsy.

Katie, as well as her mother, regarded Jeames in a disparaging light, as "only Jeames" and somewhat of an incubus. No doubt if evil had befallen the lad, if others had assailed and belittled him, mother and sister would have turned round in his defence and stood up for him. But at the present moment there was nothing on earth for which to pity him. He did not pity himself. He was stolidly pleased with his lot. Drudgery had no disgust for him. He enjoyed, so far as his power of enjoyment went, marshalling and ruling the small fry, and he did it not unkindly.

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There was worth in Jeames—granted, that it did not lie on the surface—and that it needed patient discrimination to detect it.

"And you, sir, you've done the construing I set for you, and the essay that should have been given in yesterday, I hope will make its appearance tomorrow?"

The Master addressed the other lad, known as Benjie, in a vein of sarcasm.

Benjie was Jeames's contemporary, a swarthy, stalwart, rather handsome boy, so unlike every member of the Pryde family that anyone might have said at a glance that he had not a drop's blood in common with them, which was true. He was a boarder at the Master's. He had come to the schoolhouse so long ago, when he was a child in petticoats, that he seemed to belong to it and the Prydes, and could not remember any earlier protectors and surroundings.

Benjie had not done the construing and he had not finished the essay, and he told the questioner so with a certain dogged defiance. There was a permanent strain of defiance in Benjie's voice and yet it was an honest voice, susceptible of shades of loyalty, magnanimity and tenderness, as well as of incipient revolt, suspicion and vindictive retaliation.

The Master's eyes flashed round upon the unrepentant offender inclined to brazen out his offence, with the look of a man unaccustomed to contradiction and the challenge "Who are you who would question my authority here, in my own schoolhouse?" But he restrained himself. This was no fit antagonist. He had always known Benjie to be a difficult subject.

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A cleverer boy than Jeames, sufficiently gifted to have been a dangerous rival for Neil Menzies in his place as dux of the school, if Benjie had so chosen, he was yet unsupported by that ballast of steadiness which kept—Jeames, for instance, so firmly fixed in his place. Benjie was flighty, desultory in application, restless and unsettled.

Adam Pryde regarded him quietly.

"It is your own business, Benjie, you will be the sufferer if you neglect it. I have warned you—you are getting too big to be thrashed into submission and diligence. If you choose to throw away the opportunities presented to you, you must e'en take the consequences."

Benjie's sole answer was a slight toss of the head with its coal-black hair.

The Master's manner to Benjie was peculiar. There was the least flavour of instinctive deference in it contending with a flavour the very opposite—that of restive contempt—the two wielded or balanced—however you might like to call it—with the lingering compassion of a man of mature years and excellent principles.

CHAPTER V

THE MYSTERY OF BENJIE

THE mystery of Benjie was very pitiful and not without a streak of horror in its pitifulness. As it had come to pass so many years ago, it was only known to the older people in the parish, and even to them it was but a vague and garbled tradition, since measures had been taken to hush up the hideous story and bury it in oblivion, from the beginning. It was only fully known to three people in Rowanden, and partially known to a fourth. One of the three had played the part of frenzied conspirator in the ghastly affair, the two others were the Doctor and his brother, the Commodore. The fourth, who had been told as little of the story as could be helped, but who had guessed the main outlines, was Adam Pryde, the schoolmaster.

It was one of those Caliban incidents in his parochial experience—the thought of which caused the Doctor's head to droop in an overpowering sense of the awful corruption of human nature, and of the tremendous travail of the struggle for its redemption—the foundation of which had been laid eighteen hundred years before, while the world, in spite of its great attainments, was still lying in wickedness, with gross darkness covering the mass of the people.

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The mystery was connected with an ugly feature in the social aspect of Rowanden—a feature which, perhaps, could only be met with in a Scotch parish in the days when, amidst the “oddities” and “characters” sure to be found in remote districts, there was frequently to be found a considerable admixture of men and women mentally afflicted, but allowed to roam at large and freely regarded as harmless, till sometimes one or other of them committed some act of violence which led to the offender’s incarceration for the term of his or her life. These unfortunates were the “naturals” or “innocents” who received a rough, not unkindly toleration from their older neighbours, while the young fry of the quarters, in the ignorance, hardness and insensate love of amusement which belong to youth, only measured the amount of mockery and derision which they launched at their victims by the degree of good-nature and placableness which they were understood to possess.

The specimens of these “simple” people, notorious figures in Rowanden, were two poor women—a mother and daughter—the one elderly, the other middle-aged, known as “the Daft Wives of Rowanden.” Alas! alas! neither was a wife, and both were mothers. The degree and kind of their dementia differed. There was a tradition that the elder had come a stranger to the place, a woman of wild, ungovernable passions but endowed with reason rendering her responsible for her actions. A cruel wrong upset what reason she had, and left her for a time raging mad. She was conveyed in a strait jacket to the lunatic asylum in the next county, as a

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pauper lunatic. When she recovered sufficiently to be discharged it was as an Ishmaelite, with her hand against every man, as she believed every man's hand was against her. She wandered back to Rowanden with a half-witted child. There were those who declared that the mother's intellect was not so disordered that she could not have worked in an ordinary fashion for her child. But she chose to be a social outcast. As for her bodily strength it was far beyond the common, so that she could stand any amount of exposure and hardship. She took up her abode with her child in a deserted hovel, and deliberately set herself to live on the charity of her fellow-creatures, or, as it would seem a better way of expressing her conduct, to prey on their slender resources in revenge for the grievous injury which one man had done to her. She held intercourse with no one, she spoke to no one. She might have been deaf and dumb as well as crazy. She furnished herself with a sack, and walked from farm to farm, and from house to house of the town of Kilcairnie, silently presenting the sack for contributions of stale bread, half picked bones, cold potatoes, etc. Some of the donors gave out of compassion, and some from fear of the scowling, desolate woman who thus demanded alms as a right, and if she was denied them would stand for an hour rooted to the spot in conspicuous protest against the niggards who refused the wretched gratuity.

When the child was older an attempt was made to deliver her so far from the terrible association with her mother. She was sent to school, the mother making no resistance, where, if the child picked up

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little else, she learnt to behave herself like her companions. She was certainly weak-minded, but, as she grew up silly but docile, capable of working under those who would work with her, and direct her in her task whatever it might be, a day place was found for her with the wife of the "shop-of-a'-things" in the village, the girl going and coming every morning and night, between the outlying cottage of the mother and the little shop of her employer. She was a silly, good-natured, somewhat pretty creature to those who could dispense with a soul in their estimate of prettiness.

Suddenly there came a change over the situation. The wife of the master of the small shop refused to receive "Sybbie" as she had called herself—no one had supposed that the name was given her in baptism—into her household any longer, nay, dismissed the poor, senseless thing with contumely. Her mother's door received her and closed upon her. The elder woman ceased her daily rounds, and it became a problem what the two could be doing—whether the frenzied mother had proceeded to murder her daughter, what they were living upon, whether they were starving to death in company—until the dread of such a tragedy in the midst of them must have forced even the least meddlesome of neighbours to compel an entrance. Then it was discovered that the ramshackle cottage was empty, with the key deposited under the thatch, and nothing left within worth the greediest miser's acceptance. The former inhabitants had departed under cloud of night.

There was no question of the cause of the domestic earthquake—sad to say, in ordinary circumstances it

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was too frequent an occurrence in rural Scotland in spite of the austerity of her creed. It was partly due, no doubt, to the extreme simplicity and elasticity of the old Scotch marriage laws, which in another sense afforded protection to such women as needed protection, and the transgression was generally redeemed in the end by marriage in some form. But these were not ordinary circumstances, and the sin against the witless daughter of "the Daft Wife" was so dastardly, so near to sacrilege, that it must have awakened a loud outcry of resentment, and call for punishment, had there not been an awed whisper from the beginning that the sinner stood too high in rank to be summoned to account by these humble judges, or to be susceptible to any penalty they could inflict.

A wild young relative of the Lord of the Manor—the same old messmate of the Commodore's who had been roused by him to a brief conception of his duties as landlord—had been staying for a time at the George Inn, Kilcairnie, in order to exercise the privilege granted by his kinsman of shooting over the Rowanden farms. He had been out and about, roving at all hours, for several weeks, during which he had been seen more than once in the dusk, with his pointers at his heels, and his gun over his shoulder, escorting "Silly Sybbie," and getting his fun out of her folly. Stories of his frolics and excesses belonging rather to a bygone generation, but apt to crop up at any time among recklessly vicious lads of his rank, were in abundant circulation. The mere suspicion where its justification could not easily be procured, together with the relationship of the

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culprit to a power so supreme and imposing—however rarely exerted—as that of Lord Sandilands, shut the gossips' mouths, or only suffered the report to be breathed under the breath of the retailers. It was not even revived unless in the same subdued form when, after many months' absence, the mother and daughter reappeared in their old haunts, took up their abode in their former miserable dwelling, and recommenced together the practices which had at an earlier date secured them a living. For Sybbie, as well as her mother, was now furnished with a sack, with which she started in the morning empty, dangling limply over her arm, and returned in the late afternoon or evening, more or less full, hoisted on her back which bent beneath the burden. Charity was not refused to her any more than to the other beggar, since it was plain to the most casual observer how many steps she had descended in the interval, in the intellectual scale. She had not the forbidding aspect of her mother which frightened the children from molesting the pair, and obtained for them a complete immunity from the jeering gibes and teasing persecution with which the young barbarians, when they were congregated together, as in pouring out of school, and in loitering in groups on the various roads, would pursue and torment other "naturals" belonging to the parish or visiting it at stated periods. But Sybbie's soft eyes had become positively lack-lustre, her foolish, quickly-coming-and-going smile was converted into an idiotic permanent simper. In the constant silence in which she imitated her mother, it was evident that she was rapidly losing the power of speech,

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which, when it was attempted, was degenerating into a guttural mumble that nobody could understand.

The women had brought back no child with them—whether a living child had been born, or what had become of it nobody had cared to inquire. There was an idea that they had some provision for their subsistence besides what they sought from use and wont, or from the mere acquisitive faculty which is often prominent in minds defective or diseased. The house, which had been falling into ruin even when the elder woman first took possession of it, was repaired into habitableness, and that not by the orders, nor at the expense of the kirk-session or the heritors. It was noticed that, destitute as they were, “the Daft Wives,” according to the title which was soon bestowed on them, had not, in their coarse, bedraggled or dust-stained clothes, which did not drop off their backs, any look of pinching want. It is true they went their rounds in all weathers, but there are other ups and downs besides those occasioned by the weather in the flow of charity. The most regular givers may happen to be absent, the thoughtless, hand-to-mouth people who are most lavish in their doles may have come to the end of their tether, and be doomed to be beggars themselves, but no such accidents appeared to affect the couple and reduce them to extremity. They neither asked nor received parish aid, and at that date there was no thought of confinement for such outcasts from reason as they were.

As years passed, the younger—Sybbie—aged with long strides. There is not the same space of life

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allotted to imbeciles as to people with healthily developed brains. Soon a stranger had difficulty in telling which was the mother and which the daughter. Both heads were equally grey and, what was a strange sight among women of their class at that date, they were uncovered, no mutch, however soiled or crushed, no bonnet, however rough or weather-beaten, was there to shelter those heads bowed by the ghastliest misfortune which can befall human beings, and whitening under the weight of years. The sun shone and the rain fell on them without protection. These uncared-for, exposed heads, with the wisps of grey hair straggling in the wind, lent a touch of savageness to the look of the two. Grey figures they were from top to toe, moving along, the backs slouched under the more or less laden sacks. The women walked a pace or two apart, the elder before, the younger behind, with the same heavy, dull, monotonous foot-tread; they looked neither to the right hand nor to the left, their eyes often obscured by their shaggy hair, either fixed on the ground or staring straight before them. The pair took always the centre of the road, hardly moving aside for horse or cart, seeming as if they were scarcely conscious of what was passing in the world around them. Whether they ever held communication with each other in their blurred, failing speech, either on the roads or in their cottage, none could tell. They were never seen to converse, they were like two creatures on the very outskirts of humanity, on the verge of the bestial kingdom. No grimmer spectacle was presented in Rowanden than that of "the Daft Wives," while they meddled

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with nobody, and did not so much as look, except in thrusting forward their sacks, at their neighbours, from whom they were separated by an awful barrier, intangible, unassailable. Little children ran scared from the sight of them. Strangers shrank as a rule from the extraordinary experience of coming in contact with so singular and repulsive a couple. When they turned a corner and came suddenly upon fellow-travellers—ordinary men and women—the shadow of a cloud fell over the lightest hearted and most thoughtless, words would stay arrested on the speakers' lips, one person would grasp the arm of another, and say in a shivering undertone, "The Daft Wives of Rowanden."

Thirteen years before, these poor women—not then so demented and collapsed—sought admission after nightfall to Dr Menzies' study, where he happened to be sitting in conversation with his brother, the Commodore. The visitors did not require the Commodore's absence in preparing to make one of those confidences which a minister may sometimes be expected to hear. But this was no ordinary confidence imparted by a complainant—sane, however cruelly aggrieved. This was the fierce tale of a woman three-fourths mad, with all the cunning of madness in striving to secure and wreak her revenge. While suspecting the brutal betrayal of the defenceless Sybbie, the mother had taken measures, wily in their frenzy, to cause the unspeakable wrong he had committed to recoil on the reckless offender's head. She declared there had been a promise of marriage given to Sybbie in mocking words, spoken and written, of which evidence could

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be brought forward both by witnesses and on paper. She called upon the shocked and confounded Doctor to help her to establish the claim for redress according to the law of Scotland.

The story was as incredible as it was horrible, but the Doctor, full of righteous wrath at the outrage on a creature as helpless as a child, wished for a moment that the reprisal were possible which should prevent the wickedness going unpunished. Why should the heartless, shameless man not be compelled to pay his part of the penalty—he on whom the odium of the sin ought to be laid? Was it too heavy a retribution to compel him to give his disgraced name and the means of support to the witless creature whom he, with the light of reason granted to him, and the sense of pity, of mercy inseparable from that sense of honour which all gentlemen professed, had brutally defrauded of her one possession? The old law of Scotland had always existed for the defence of the weak, for many a one whom it righted not so pitifully, sacredly weak as poor “Silly Sybbie.”

“If she is wi’ bairn to a scoondrel of a fine gentleman,” urged Sybbie’s mother, the dumb speaking with a rush of incoherent words, “Minister, is it no for you to take into account that Tam Halliday and Jack Soutar overheard him laching to hissels’ as he ca’ed her ‘my wifie,’ ‘my braw wifie,’ when he gaed oexterin’ in wi’ her along the road. And aince when he was scoogin’ in the hallan from a shoor, I pued him ben. The drink was on him so that he couldna keep his feet and pu’ back. Ay, and I made him—though he could hardly haud the pen—write a bit letter, and him crying it was a grand joke—(but it

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was me that was clever, clever all the time, though they ca' me a daft wife)—bidding her' come to him under the name o' 'Mistress Charteris'—his ain name, you ken—at the inn in Kilcairnie. Noo, Minister, if you do your duty, we'll joke him an' be upsides with him and his grandeur. My Syb will be the only leddy he'll ever ca' wife, as she has a guðe richt to be, since he hissel' gave her the title, and she'll be the mither of his heir."

As the stunned Doctor wavered for a second, Sybbie's mother recognising the wavering, the Commodore interposed. He was a man to whom discipline, law and order meant much. No one could feel more keenly the dastardliness of the offence which had been committed. On the other hand, all his strongest prejudices were enlisted beforehand against the beggar woman who had deliberately—so far as deliberation was in accordance with her disordered brain—sought to entrap the offender. His common sense was not in this case overborne by sentiment as the Doctor's was. If the Commodore was influenced by the fact that the graceless culprit was the nephew and heir-presumptive to the sailor's old messmate, who had been moved by Alan Menzies' representation to an act of common justice to his Lordship the laird's tenants, the Commodore was unconscious of being swayed by such an influence, while he was well aware that his old acquaintance, though no saint himself, would never forgive the public exposure of so disgraceful an affair on his nephew's part. The worthless young lad's prospects would be irretrievably ruined—to no purpose. For, as the Commodore craved

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leave to remind his brother in the briefest sentence, no law court in Scotland or out of it would legalise an inferred marriage between a man in Gilbert Charteris's position and an imbecile come of the lowest of the low

The Doctor knew his brother was right, and set about, with a sigh like a groan, a task which he only accomplished with the utmost difficulty—that was to convince Sybbie's mother that her guileful scheme of wild justice was impossible, and to subdue her into accepting the only atonement he could hope to procure. The poor compensation would be of money, of an allowance for the woman's needs, if the ruling spirit would consent to touch it, and of provision to be made for the child. Sybbie was still simpering and staring around her with a vacant stare, when her mother, with what fragment of wit was spared to her, sullenly yielded to the Doctor's cogent arguments. But she did not quit the Manse without a burst of furious resentment and a delirious threat directed against the man who, as she judged, had proved her enemy in the encounter. She raised her bloodshot eyes, and shook her fist in the Commodore's face as she passed him.

"I'll be even wi' you yet," she shouted, "ye long rip o' a man-o'-war's man—you a jolly tar! The sicht o' you would sour sweet milk. I ken you killed your first captain wi' a merlin-spike, and are waitin' till the foul deed be discovered to be dragged to the gallows tree."

"Never mind her, Alan," the Doctor appealed to his brother. "Her tongue is no scandal, for she does not ken what she is saying."

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"Why should I mind her, Archie?" inquired the Commodore, with his slight, slow smile.

"Me no ken!" the aggressor cried again, in her hoarse, husky voice. "Fu' weel do I ken what I'm sayin'. I dinna waste words like my neebours that I shouldna be sure of my meaning when I div speak. And tak' you care that you haena to eat your ain words, for a' you're a minister and a learned doctor."

Such was poor Benjie's descent, and when he was hardly past infancy he was brought from some distance and committed to the care of the parish schoolmaster and his wife, to be reared by them. At that time, while their own two children were still young, the Prydes received a few boys as boarders, so that less notice was taken of the youthful instalment. He was supposed to be an orphan like one or two of the other boys, and his name Benjie Peebles (the Christian name of the doctor who brought him into the world, and the name of the shire in which he was born) aroused no associations. Adam Pryde was partly informed of the truth and guessed the rest. But, being a just man, unwilling to render the path of the child entrusted to his care well-nigh impassable by arousing in connection the double prejudice likely to be insurmountable of his illegitimacy, and of his being the son of the one and the grandson of the other of "the Daft Wives," the Master kept his counsel—even in his own family, even to the wife of his bosom—for, as he said to himself, women's tongues were apt to wag and Lizzie Annie's tongue was no exception to the others. In the meantime

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he awaited developments. Would the poor child have the awful heritage of at least two generations? But no, Benjie took after his father's family in looks and intellect. Not only so, he must have harked far back, for the Master, with all his constitutional respect for gentle birth, had never heard of a Charteris who was scholarly, and Benjie had the making of a scholar in him, if he would apply himself and not go off at a tangent on "freits and fancies." But some allowance must be made for him—the hole of the pit whence he was dug was a very different hole from that out of which Neil Menzies had emerged. It was enough to say he was not a bad boy, and instead of being wanting in intellect, he had something to the bargain when compared with ordinary boys, not to say with the exemplary Jeames. Benjie would settle and be a credit in his degree to his school and schoolmaster, as Adam Pryde counted confidently on Neil Menzies being. In the meantime Benjie's guardian would do his best for him. He would furnish the boy with a solid foundation of scholarship, and when he was older, a portion of the sum of money which had been set aside for his use would be spent in sending him to the university. Then it would be seen whether Benjie's talents were but a flash in the pan, or whether they would not only earn for him a maintenance, but even for the lad, in addition, a fair amount of distinction.

An important detail in the agreement for the bringing up of Benjie was that he should have nothing to do with his most undesirable of kin, "the Daft Wives," that they should make no claim upon

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him, no advance to establish an acquaintance; but it would be as easy to bind the wind as to make a compact and see that it was kept with two practically irresponsible persons. True, it was questionable whether poor Sybbie, even ten years before, could realise the relation in which she stood to the little boy, though she would creep up to him, stroke his pinafore, and simper timidly in his face, as a dog will sniff and fawn on a man or a woman of whose identity he is doubtful, and of whose tie of goodwill towards himself he has only a dim, troubled conception.

But in Sybbie's mother's lunacy—wilder, stormier, more dangerous—there were always chinks and crevices, which gleams of sanity, with its vivid remembrances, its passionate resentments, its cravings for reprisal, could penetrate, and fill her with a dogged determination to circumvent the school-master, to circumvent the minister, to thwart their wishes, whatever came of it. For that matter she had no clear design in what she did—only the impulse to shirk an obligation she resented, and disobey an injunction of which she could not see the force. Beyond that her mind was too chaotic, too liable to fiery upheavals to concoct subtle schemes. But she could watch and wait and stealthily waylay the child while he was still a child, when he was alone, and terrify him by the strange guise and stranger looks of the two women. The interviews were not to heap caresses on the child, which in their turn would have been sufficiently alarming, coming from the grim mother and daughter, they were more for the deliverance of threats, though

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these were not directed against the quaking little Benjie but against his keepers.

"Laudie," the older woman would say, in the deep muffled voice which he heard from no other quarter, "are they gi'en you your due? Mind, it is pyed for, ay, that it is. If the dominie taks his taws to you, or the fule wife wi' her fluthers o' dress seeks to starve you, or the hale set—the minister and the long sailor-man, wha killed his first captain wi' a merlin-spike—settle to piscen you, and get you out o' their way and keep the sillar, you may cast that in their teeth. You can say I telled you, if you like. It is a' ane to me, laudie, wha kens you're my oe."

Neither the Master nor any of his household were aware of these clandestine meetings, and it showed the tremendous effect they had on the child that, even when he was little beyond infancy, he implicitly obeyed their promoter in sedulously concealing them—not merely from Adam Pryde and Mrs Pryde, but from his childish companions. Can anyone reckon on the result of a child growing up with a terrifying secret locked up in its burdened little breast? There is one thing certain, it will render the child lonely even in a crowd. When other children are pouring out their hearts in the entire freedom and fearlessness, which is the chief source of their happiness, he is painfully conscious of a reservation. He has to check himself, in dread of betraying what it scares him even to think of, so, even though he were to start with being the lightest-hearted of small mortals, he would be inevitably launched — young though he might be — on the

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perilous path of introspection with its fits of brooding and moping.

When the boy was older "the Daft Wives" no longer haunted him, crossing his path when he least expected them, with a baneful pertinacity. The leader of the two was in a different mood and she was sinking deeper into that dead sea of sullen obliviousness of all around her, from which her faculties freed themselves at rarer intervals. But the mischief was done, the seeds of alienation and distrust were sown, and it would be well if those of deceit and enmity did not follow.

It was a matter of surprise to Adam Pryde that the boy Benjie, quick and sharp in pursuing other investigations, did not put awkward questions to him with regard to his origin and his relatives—if he had any. He heard other boys speaking of their parents and their homes, he saw those of them who lived at some distance starting gleefully to spend their holidays with their friends, taking their welcome in these other attractive quarters, not simply as a matter of course, but as an incontestable right, while he, Benjie, remained at the schoolhouse, went nowhere, received no familiar citation, had not even the faintest recollection of another place of abode more surely his, of another set of people to whom he belonged more entirely.

The child Benjie, with his horror of his persecutors, had laid up sundry cruel, coarse words, whose meaning he could not then compass, in his tender mind. When he grew older, and certain blunt hints and assertions of still older boys served to enlighten him, he put two and two together—the fragments of

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Sybbie's mother's harsh sentences and the lines of the boys' careless talk—and came near to guessing the ghastly truth. Little wonder that he shrank from further revelations, that he had no desire to hear more.

Benjie's silence was suspicious, and the Master came to the conclusion that though the whole truth was known only to a few, some old conjectured portion of it must have drifted to the surface again, and been conveyed—probably in some schoolboy taunt—to the person principally concerned. It must have been a shock and trial to the lad, but it rescued the Master from a difficulty, and, after all, it might be that the pain and mortification thus inflicted would be a less crushing blow at this date than if it had come later in life. Certainly Benjie, with the dash of sombreness and cynicism already discernible in the dark, handsome boy, had not anticipated his downfall and rendered it worse by building castles in the air in reference to his progenitors and his prospects.

It was not a subject on which anybody could question Benjie to ascertain how he came by his knowledge, though, if Mrs Pryde had been cognisant of what had been and still was in the air, she might have taken it upon her to approach him, since she was one of those stolid gossips who rush in where angels fear to tread. But the mistress of the schoolhouse remained in ignorance, while Benjie had grown up a somewhat isolated, alien figure among the Prydes—among them, but not of them. This was from no unkindness on their part, and no lack of friendliness on his. The Master had been

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faithful to his trust, Mrs Pryde and Katie had rather made a show of preference of Benjie before Jeames in their domestic relations, since there was an element of what was personable and interesting, according to women's ideas, in the one, which did not exist in the other. Neither did this slight flavour of favouritism mar in the least the kind of comradeship which propinquity created between Benjie and Jeames, who was far too sensible and well pleased with himself to dream of being jealous. In most lights it would be hard to pick a quarrel with the little Master. When one thought of it, the two people with the greatest affinity to each other at the schoolhouse were Benjie and Katie. Both were discontented, not with the vulgar, pushing, striving discontent of Mrs Pride, but with the divine discontent of vague, tumultuous aspirations, of gropings after finer, greater things, while neither knew precisely what they would be at.

PART II

THE STORM GATHERS

CHAPTER I

LONG FROCKS AND TAILED COATS

THE boys and girls of yesterday were the young men and women of to-day. The boys all the more so that they had been, in a sense and in a degree, out in the world, left to themselves, exposed to temptation, called upon to show whether those years of budding maturity, the most critical in their lives, were to be, according to the pathetic old saying, "winning" years or "tyning" years. These formed the short spaces of time in which they were to be practically saved for use and honour, to be good men walking in the ways of righteousness, or lost, starting on a career of vice, going slowly and delicately at first, no doubt, guilty of nothing worse than selfish folly or sloth, but with ever accelerated speed rushing all down hill, till, long before the sun was set, the miserable end was achieved. Checks may occur in the downward path, thank God; a new start may be made, and the past retrieved, with some loss of time and strength, but as a rule the years when the boy is developing into the man are the "winning" or the "tyning" years in which he seals his fate. The old saying has much truth in it.

Neil Menzies, Benjie Peebles, even Jeames Pryde,

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had all been to college. Neil for the longest period—seven years in Edinburgh studying the humanities and theology, and three years in Germany devoted to theology, so that the Commodore's son was now five-and-twenty, having had his license to preach from his presbytery. Benjie Peebles had been five years in Edinburgh studying medicine, and two years walking the hospitals in the same city, so that he was now in his twenty-third year. He had passed his examinations with considerable credit, and been "capped" at an earlier age than usual as a qualified medical practitioner.

The "little Master," who was the eldest of the three lads, had also had his three terms—a more liberal allowance than his father had projected for him—at the university, and could be thenceforth regarded without cavil, not merely as a fit assistant for Adam Pryde in his descent into the vale of years, but as fully justified in expecting to be appointed the schoolmaster's successor. Jeames had attained his twenty-seventh year.

✓ In each instance the boy had been father to the man. The born student was still there in Neil Menzies—enthusiastic, dreamy-looking, as his Uncle Archie looked, younger than his years, with an unassailable youthfulness—pathetic or absurd according to the light in which the observer regarded it. His soft, silky hair, dangling irresponsibly, was still a nuisance to him. His eyes were apt to have an expression as if their gaze was directed inwards instead of outwards, or as if they were looking at something very far off. He had passed from boyish ignorance to the knowledge of evil as well as good.

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But the knowledge had done him as little harm as is consistent with sinful humanity. Perplexed and troubled many a time as one of the results of his studiousness, he had remained after the pattern of his father, who was yet so unlike him in other respects—reverent, loyal, pure in heart, as became his cloth.

Benjie Peebles was still discontented, though whether there was not more of the worldly and less of the divine in his discontent, than in bygone days was at least problematical, notwithstanding that he was still somewhat at odds with the world, and sore on the point. He had not passed through the ordeal of being his own master, exposed to hydra-headed temptation, with as little scathe and danger as Neil had passed. There had been intervals when it had seemed to hang in the balance, nay, rather to incline to the wrong side, whether his adolescence would not prove his "tyning" time, when the very few friends he possessed—whom he hardly counted as friends, since he was of the age and temperament to revel in Byronic gloom, and in calling himself friendless—the Doctor, the dominie, one or two of the companions who had known him long enough and well enough to care what became of him, shook their heads and trembled for him. But, under Providence, what was good in him asserted itself and routed the enemy. After all, his abilities and tastes—the higher man in him—could not long be satisfied with coarse self-indulgence and the riot of lawless defiance. He had overcome for a season, while the conflict had left its traces on him. In place of

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seeming younger than his years he appeared decidedly older, which simple people declared was greatly in his favour where his profession was in question. His eyes could not meet yours with the clear candour which dwelt in Neil Menzies' eyes. There were hard lines in his dark face even while it retained its youthful roundness of outline. Both young men, Neil and Benjie, were personally attractive, rather handsome lads in their different styles.

Jeames Pryde had altered least of the three, probably because he was only more formed in himself and set in his orbit, than when he was last seen. He was as complacent, pre-engrossed and sententious in platitudes as ever. His very person had changed little. He was not an inch taller, only his breadth had filled out. Still, he was improved both physically and mentally, and would improve yet more as time progressed. What was ridiculously heavy and clumsy, and preternaturally sober and staid in the boy, was nearer desirable strength and steadfastness in the young man—something trustworthy and to be depended upon; no less valuable in an assistant schoolmaster than in any other official. It is remarkable how solid worth tells, even when it is found under an uncouth exterior. And Jeames Pryde was not uncouth, he was only intensely commonplace as well as a trifle pompous, both in mind and body. He had gone through his short college course with the matter-of-fact correctness of a man twice his age, the exemplary head of a family. When it came to that, nobody had dreamt he would do anything else, or had apprehended a shade of peril for Jeames. It would have been as reasonable to dread that the old

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parish church, or Jeames's father's solidly-built school, would move from their sites and indulge in perverse straying here and there, and giddy, unbecoming gambols. Why, his quiet, homely irreproachableness lent a certain unconscious, simple dignity to his short, stout figure and broad, flat face, on which a pair of spectacles, announcing his recently-discovered short-sightedness, rested uneasily, betraying a tendency to slide down a nose guiltless of a bridge. He was still called "the little Master" in the domain of the school. The name stuck to him from old use and wont, and in order to distinguish him from "the Master" proper. But it no longer contained a particle of disparagement or grain of contempt. Boys are no mean judges of such characters as come within their sphere. Jeames's character was not such as to excite any very lively liking from his satellites. He had no originality to impress them, nor sufficient imagination to sympathise with them, either in their difficulties or their delights. Scotch boys were accustomed to prepare their lessons without assistance, and as to any teacher, however slightly divided from them by years, presiding over their little games and joining in them—consisting chiefly as they did of shinty in summer, and sliding and snowballing in winter, for cricket and football had not crossed the Border, so far as country districts were concerned, upwards of sixty years ago, such condescension on the part of masters, big or little, was unheard of. Had it occurred it would only have been to awaken jeers and to render everybody uncomfortable. But these youthful censors could recognise the honest thoroughness of all the little Master knew and taught,

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and the plodding patience with which he insisted on sharing his acquirements with them. He earned their respect if he could not win their affection. He would have been a hero-worshipper indeed who could have manufactured a hero out of Jeames Pryde, but he stood next to his father in the boys' estimation, a Master not to be laughed at or cheated or scorned. He was dull, no doubt, and nobody envied him or wished to fill his place, but so all lessons were dull, unless to a few scholars like the Master and the Doctor, and the post of a schoolmaster—full-blown or in the chrysalite assistant state—is, as a rule, abhorrent to the generality of boys.

Unlike the two others in whose company he has been brought forward, there was nothing either picturesque or winning about the person of the little Master. It has been already said that he was inelegantly short and stout, his hair was still red in colour, his eyebrows and eyelashes light till they could hardly be distinguished. His complexion had not even the saving grace of tan, since he led a sedentary life, and in violent contrast to his mother's ruddiness and his sister Katie's version of faint shell-pink or delicately-tinted ivory, Jeames's large face was pasty in tone, while his upper lip was long and his chin receded.

There was just the degree of familiar yet slight intimacy between the three young men which might have been expected to occur with regard to lads who had begun by being school-fellows, and had followed up the association by attending the same university in the northern metropolis, which, to each lad as he arrived fresh from the rustic solitudes of Rowanden,

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appeared in what was to him its rush of traffic and splendour of adornment, a howling wilderness of grandeur, culture and danger. No wonder the lad turned wistfully to a well-known, friendly face in the crowd of strangers and sought its support, though the owner of the face might have little sympathy with the habits and tastes of the lonely student. It was a kind of artificial, arbitrary freemasonry between the three young men bred of equality of age, and of all hailing from the same remote country district, where everybody knew his neighbour, and claimed a right to be interested in his affairs.

Time had set his seal more lightly on the people who had stayed on—vegetating some folks would have said—at Rowanden. The middle-aged were only a little more middle-aged, with not a very perceptible increase of wrinkles and grey hairs, stoutness or leanness.

True, the younger members of the women of the community had crossed the rubicon between early girlhood and young womanhood, but as they had remained practically in the same place, they had simply grown up and developed in the course of natural growth with no abrupt transition, no decided stage to which they could look back and say it was then we became responsible creatures. It was then we realised that we were no longer bigger children, but accountable girls rapidly becoming women, with duties and cares—still small in proportion, but in course of preparing us for such careers as our mothers or aunts had before us. (Sixty years ago the idea of women having individual careers, apart from those of the immediate seniors of their sex, had not been so

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much as heard of in a country place like that of Rowanden.)

Marjorie of the Manse and Katie Pryde had as yet faced no tests and undergone no trials which had not been foreshadowed in the experience of their childhood. A presentation at Court, "coming out," as it was called, entering into society, had not been for them as for girls in a higher rank. The substitution for Madam at the Manse in her younger day had been the finishing of her education at a high-class school. Afterwards it was understood that she was to put in force the acquirements she had gained, to maintain a certain amount of solid reading, to keep up her music and drawing, to assist her mother and elder sisters in carrying out the social usages of their set, and to join them in going more or less into company and entertaining company in return, in a manner not possible for a schoolgirl, whose main duty was learning lessons.

Mrs Menzies regretted that even this break between girlhood and womanhood of at least a year—probably a couple of years—withdrawal from home and launching into a new world, though it was only the guarded world of school, was rendered impossible for Marjorie by the straitened circumstances of the family. The older woman thought such an epoch very desirable for matching a girl with a number of other girls, showing her of how little consequence she was among them, for rubbing off the angles of her disposition, for widening her horizon and preventing her waxing prim, or opinionative, or distressingly narrow in her provincialism. But necessity has no law, so Marjorie of the Manse

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had to remain in the wilds, the letting down her frocks and the putting up her hair in a more formal fashion than that of tied together plaits, serving as almost the sole signs of her emancipation.

Mrs Pryde at the schoolhouse's view of a winding-up boarding-school for Katie was doubtless a different conception of a school than that held by Madam at the Manse for Marjorie. Mrs Pryde's imagination reverted even to earlier schools when behaviour rather than learning was taken into account, and where the school programme, if it did not state in so many words, certainly hinted the imparting of the use of the silver fork, how to enter and how to leave a room, the prettiest mode of sitting hands in lap, and the greatest ease combined with perfect propriety in starting and sustaining a drawing-room or dinner-table conversation at once intelligent and sprightly. These branches of polite education, along with great attention to the young lady's music, and the cultivation in her of facility in writing elegant little notes which did not come under the head of Adam Pryde's specimens of "commercial letters," or "letters on important occasions," were what Mrs Pryde particularly wanted for Katie. If, in addition, she made desirable friends at school, it would be killing two dogs with one stone. But Mrs Pryde, too, was doomed to disappointment in this matter. Katie, never a very strong girl, was so delicate just about the time Mrs Pryde had fixed upon her for being sent to a boarding-school, that her mother dared not trust her from home, and her father on being appealed to would not hear of the experiment. He had

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rather a poor opinion of girls' boarding-schools, and it was simply to please Lizzie Annie that he had been brought to consent to Katie's expatriation. He had gratified himself in complying with a prudent precaution by giving a university finish to Jeames's education, so Katie's mother had surely the right to dispose of her growing-up girl in the manner on which she had set her heart.

It was no disappointment to Katie that her mother's project was not put into execution, while it was a keen mortification to Marjorie of the Manse that she was deprived of the advantages her mother had enjoyed, and which the daughter had craved, that they might render her a more capable, useful person in her father's household and in his parish. There were tasks which, to Marjorie's vexation, her mother would not permit her to undertake or even to share. There were others in which, if she had studied hard at school and improved herself sufficiently, she might have been permitted to relieve Mrs Menzies in playing the part of family governess and tutor to her younger sister and the smaller boys. Why, if she had been trained in book-keeping—a branch of education which she had often heard her mother lament had been totally neglected in the girls' course of her day, she might have helped her father in the house and parish accounts, to which he did not fail to attend, of which he never complained, but which Marjorie knew he did not like, but found worrying, an obstacle to his sermon composing, and to his contributions to that statistical history of Scotland which was to be a standard for all time.

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Katie Pryde had no younger brothers and sisters to look after. Mrs Pryde was still equal to controlling the domestic management of the schoolhouse. She would have regarded any active interposition from Katie as at once a reflection on Mrs Pryde's capabilities, and a disparagement to the gentility of her daughter.

Thus, as a result of circumstances no less than of character, Marjorie of the Manse was quite as busy a young person as she had been in her early girlhood, ten years before. And Katie Pryde was about as idle an individual as a reasonable being could be.

Though the nursery at the Manse was at last dismantled, Simmie, the cadet of the family, being a slim, reedy boy of ten, while Charlie and Hughie were so far out in the world as being boarded with an aunt who took them metaphorically to her bosom for the smallest consideration that her own modest finances would admit, and so enabled them to study, as their father's and grandfather's sons were bound to do, at the nearest and least expensive of the Scotch universities. The possibility was rendered still more possible by Charlie and Hughie, lads of twenty and seventeen, teaching as well as being taught, entering at once upon the responsibilities and cares of men, by acting as youthful tutors to boys younger and further back than themselves. But while even the small consideration was a drain on the pocket of the Manse, the never-ending work was little lessened. The absent lads' wardrobes, which had to be furnished as before, were, in the matter of underclothing, sent to and from the Manse in order to save the accommodating aunt's washing

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bill, and demanded twice as much supervising and renovating as when the owners were younger and at home. There was still the long-protracted toil of teaching. Nelly and Duncan were only sixteen and fifteen. Nelly was more trouble with her lessons than Marjorie had been, and Duncan was still under the Master. But, in spite of that gentleman's able rule and power of enforcing his laws, Duncan needed an eye continually kept upon him, so much stronger were the attractions of the glebe, the field and the river than those of the Greek poets and philosophers, the Latin historians and the dabblers in science while science was comparatively in its salad days. And every precaution had to be taken to keep Simmie from being demoralised by his brother. Majorie could not do all she had hoped, but she could do a good deal, rising early and sitting as late as she dared, sewing, knitting, ironing where she was not suffered to have any other share in the laundry work, teaching, gardening, helping Manse Bell in the lighter departments of house work, going the errands. These were purely family duties; the girl brought up under the shadow of the pulpit had parochial services to render as well. In fact, she had largely superseded her mother, neither so young nor so strong as she had been, and resolute to bear the heaviest home burden; while Marjorie could walk five miles' distance to the extremity of the parish and back with a message from her father, an inquiry after the sick, a mite from the cupboard almost as bare as that of the widow of Scripture, and not deign to admit fatigue. There was no choir for her to superintend, the psalmody of Rowanden was still

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entrusted solely to a precentor, Alick Deuchars, who was almost as important and independent a man in his desk as the Doctor was in his pulpit, and, while he had the freaks and vagaries of limited knowledge, would not have tolerated suggestions and objections—not from Marjorie of the Manse herself. But Sunday schools were in existence, and Marjorie now took her mother's class permanently, and had the welfare of her scholars on her mind week-days as well as Sundays. She had also the little regiment of old and infirm men and women not located conveniently in an almshouse—such an institution did not exist in Rowanden—but scattered broadcast in outlying cottages. To attend to the wants of her uncle, the Commodore—his cousin and housekeeper, Mrs Ord, having grown stiff from rheumatism, but with not the ghost of an idea, either in his mind or in hers, that she should resign her post for which she was no longer fit, and sailor Bill maintaining stoutly that he was as hale and hearty as ever, but limping always more and more heavily about the garden and the improvised stable, where, if the Commodore's old horse and Neil's fat pony had not been thoroughly well-disposed animals, arrived at the years of discretion, they would have laid their stumbling groom prostrate among their feet any morning in the seven—was much more of a family than of a parish obligation, granting it was an outside one. But it bulked so largely in the Commodore's niece's estimation during the long years of Neil's habitual absence that she felt as if she were accountable for the very stones of the old Castle of Pitthrisk, lest they should crumble down too rapidly and recklessly in her

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cousin's absence. She felt absolved from a very considerable debt, a creature set free to indulge in holiday license when Neil came home. Withal, on her busiest days, she contrived to squeeze in odd half-hours for reading.

Marjorie of the Manse's hands were indeed full, much as her child hands had been, the greatest difference being that she had not quite the same confidence in setting wrong right, and benefiting the world in general as she had then. She was much more dubious of the propriety of putting her finger into other people's pies. She was haunted and hampered by the increasing humility and delicacy which years and experience bring in their train.

Alas! for Katie Pryde, her hands were empty. Her mind was left to prey upon itself and to incur all manner of wayward, morbid tendencies. She had literally nothing to do save to keep up her music and amuse herself—the last attainment was liable to become more and more difficult. She rose late—a habit acquired when her health was most delicate, though she was now fairly strong—and breakfasted in dignified seclusion, her appetite tempted by all the delicacies her mother could secure for her. After breakfast she retired to the schoolhouse best parlour, and when she did not fill up a little time with her music, dawdled for a while over some fancy Berlin work and patchwork. She walked out a little when the day was fine, in obedience to the doctor's orders, which her father insisted on her obeying. She read a good deal in a desultory way from such books as she could get from Kilcairnie, for she had naturally a thoughtful, inquiring cast of mind, but the books were

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of a singularly mixed and often unsuitable character. They neither satisfied her craving for knowledge, nor answered the questions put by her restless, unsatisfied heart as well as head—she was often fain to take refuge in a diet of novels inferior and bad because the good were not always to be had, and were soon exhausted.

Time hung so heavily on her hands that she was frequently reduced to retiring to her bedroom, locking the door, experimenting on all the different articles of clothing she possessed, and inventing new styles of dressing her hair. Yet vanity was not a marked attribute of Katie's, she was less troubled about her personal appearance and more at rest where it was concerned, than about three-fourths of the thousand and one things which existed to arouse her languid interest. She was languid. Various people—her mother especially—thought languor highly becoming—one of the chief factors in her good looks.

After the early dinner she would lie down on the horsehair sofa and doze from sheer absence of anything worth doing in her eyes. Her mother always welcomed the attitude of lassitude, not merely because it might be helpful to Katie's delicacy, but because she had a rooted conviction that listlessness and idleness belonged to refinement, and that the perfection of elegance was attained when a pretty young woman reclined on a sofa with half-closed eyes and loosely-clasped hands. Katie withdrew early to bed—even sometimes failing to appear at the meal of the day, supper—not from physical exhaustion, though she was more tired with doing nothing than Marjorie of the Manse with doing

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many things, not with regard to any superstitious deference to "a beauty sleep," but because she had no great relish for the company of her family. There was a risk of its doing more than bore her. Poor Katie was fastidious in other matters than those which had to do with her dress, which, now that she was privileged to choose her frocks and bonnets, and could of her own accord practise self-control, was less elaborate and gorgeous than her mother would have had it, and was kept what even Marjorie of the Manse called aggressively unsoiled and uncrumpled. Katie's mother's vulgarity tormented her. Her father's alert long-headedness, his crouseness and conceit of himself provoked her. Jeames's placid confidence, his punctuality in fulfilling the letter of the law and his satisfaction in its fulfilment, was somehow a reproach and an annoyance to her. She was displeased with and ashamed of them all, while she had the grace to be hurt by her displeasure and ashamed of her shame. Poor Katie! once more. It was not heartlessness which made her a merciless critic, it was the lack of a sense of proportion, the incapacity of dealing with modes of expression and traits of character according to their true value. She had not learnt to preserve the right balance either in her faculty of observation, or in her power of judgment, and as a consequence was not on good terms either with herself or her neighbours, was unhappy and unsettled.

Both the daughter of the Manse and the daughter of the schoolhouse had been kindly dealt with personally. Marjorie Menzies was splendidly healthy, and she had the additional beauty which perfect health lends to other attractions—the vigour, supple-

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ness and elasticity, and the natural grace of such priceless qualities. Here was the full growth of young womanhood in its flower, without a particle of sensuousness or voluptuousness, rather with the unsurpassable freshness, wholesomeness and hardness of a being reared among sun and wind, loving them both, exercising every function of the winsome body, and rejoicing in the exercise. The hazel eyes were as clear as the most pellucid pool of the Cairnie Water. The chestnut hair was as richly abundant as the russet wheat or the pale barley in good, well-tilled ground. The complexion was as gladly vivid as the hues of sunrise, with the vividness toned down by the milky whiteness of the skin it suffused, which the sun, gracious in its familiarity, resolutely refused to tan or redden or freckle more than what constituted a pleasant darkening, softening and mellowing of what would otherwise have verged on being dazzling. An ordinary country girl say some? Ah! No, far from ordinary. Would for the good of mankind that girls like Marjorie of the Manse were more ordinary. She was capable of being spoilt, like the rest of us. Her habits might get into ruts. She might actually grow pragmatic, cursed with activity, overbearing, intolerant, but at the date at which she is described, with the father and mother, brothers and sisters God had given her, she was far enough removed from such vices, and it might well be that her lot in life would never call them forth.

Katie Pryde's tall, slender, scarcely-developed girlishness, the ivory and shell-pink of her thin little face, where the eyes looked too large and wistful, and there were slight hollows in the soft

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cheeks, had the fascination of fragility which was, after all, more apparent than real. But, like all commodities which strike the gazer with a lively sensation of perishableness, they are valued in proportion to the sense they inspire of the imminent danger of losing them. The public might not agree with Mrs Pryde in the fond conviction that her daughter's delicacy was the essence of gentility, or view the languor which was partly an unconscious affectation, as a crowning charm, but undoubtedly it had its subdued grace. There was something appealing and distinctly interesting in Katie. It was difficult to approach her without being sympathetic, and experiencing even a sensation of tender pity without any clear comprehension of what you were pitying her for. She was so slight and young-looking, and evidently without youth's buoyant spirits. She seemed to call on her more robust neighbours for help and protection. She was certainly intelligent, but in place of being sprightly in the old esteemed style for young women she had the opposite attraction of pensiveness, which, if it found fewer admirers, often excited admiration of a deeper, more lasting kind. Pessimism had not yet come into fashion, yet if Katie's pensiveness had been closely analysed it would have been found to have had more of the elements of pessimism than of a vague and gentle melancholy. Katie did not know herself, she did not know what to make of her life—she was never deliberately insincere. Her make-believes were those of a crude sentimentality, and an equally crude intellectuality not very rare in her sex at her age.

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Katie Pryde had one notable gift. She was genuinely musical, not in the sense of operatic music of great masters' great compositions, but of simple, sweet tunefulness and melodiousness. She knew just enough not to attempt what was beyond her power, either in piano playing or in singing. She had a soft contralto voice of not much compass, but flexible, and with pathetic tones in it. In her fondness for music she lost her listlessness, in connection with it she grew eager, animated and carried away with it, and, as she was carried away herself, she carried away others.

Marjorie of the Manse and Katie Pryde dressed after the early Victorian fashion with full skirts and long waists, cottage bonnets and shawls or scarfs.

The point at which the two went off at a tangent was that the material and making of Katie's dress were somewhat expensive for her rank, while Marjorie's dress was as inexpensive as was consistent with her station. But it is positively denied that the distinction gave Katie any advantage in her looks. A poet once sang :—

“Beauty when unadorned is adorned the most.”

We seem to have changed our opinion on that head. Of modern heroines, even men's heroines, it is for the most part carefully stated that they were dressed with cost, and after much study, in exquisitely-fitting tailor-made gowns and evening confections representing the artistic dreams—not of artists, but of dressmakers and milliners—even names of such to conjure with are cited—names which mean much money. Is it possible that our conceptions of beauty

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and harmony are now largely influenced by the arts of dressmaking and millinery? Do fine artificial feathers really make fine birds, and has nature comparatively little to do with it? Is this not a sign of decadence? What of "the sweet neglect" which used to take the poetic gazer? What of the grand simplicity which, while attending to all that was fitting, betokened thoughtful, beneficent minds above the waste of time and means involved in devotion to dress, and thus recommended itself to all the saner, wiser members of their generation? What has become of it? Do we not owe something of this downward step in ethics and æsthetics, of its accentuation and confirmation, to the practices of our luxury-loving millionaire cousins across the Atlantic? See to it, you English, Scotch and Irish authors, and you English, Scotch and Irish women who are the authors' originals. It is positively denied that such standards and judgments existed in the early forties. Marjorie of the Manse wore of a winter Menzies clan tartan frocks because the Doctor had a fancy for seeing her in his clan tartan, while it was one of the least costly of woollen fabrics; and in summer her frocks were of calico or at best muslin, the washing being looked upon as calling for little beyond some extra work at the Manse. As to the dressmaking, it was done partly by Marjorie herself, with the assistance of a girl in the parish who had got a little training, and for a modest daily sum and her food made rounds of such houses in the parish as required her help, and cleared off, in the course of two or three days' stay, the summer or the winter needs in her line. But naturally,

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as the skill neither of employed or employer was great, common sense bade them adopt the simplest models.

On the other hand, Katie Pryde's selection extended to French merinos trimmed with Genoa velvet, which matched the merinos, spring silks, summer *de laines* with pretty patterns in delicate tints, and they were now constructed and ornamented by the best dressmaker in Kilcairnie, who went every autumn and spring to London for the fashions, who was not to be despised, though she was neither a Redfern, a Worth, nor a Paquin, and though her achievements were decidedly improved by the subduing influence of that chastented taste which Katie developed as her ideas outgrew her mother's. Still it is stoutly maintained that, in the forties, no superiority in the value and fashion of Katie Pryde's toilet affected the estimation of the world of the two young women, with regard to their claims to beauty according to their different styles.

CHAPTER II

THE COMMODORE'S INHERITANCE

THE winter and spring which saw the three college lads restored to Rowanden was one of considerable spirit and stir in the parish. Young men of education and any position to speak of were so rare in that remote quarter, that the arrival and stay of three caused a faint flutter, even in the calmest, best-ordered female breast in their rank. The trio were certainly a great addition to any social enterprise or gathering in the locality, the most confirmed and captious old maid, the greatest man-hater in the circle, was forced to allow as much as that.

True, the stay of two of the young men might be presumed to be only temporary, but that, next to their bringing a flavour of the outer world of life into these quiet regions, was one of their chief attractions, something which added piquancy to their presence—here to-day, gone to-morrow—it was the more prized because of its precarious character, just what we love most and what we are in constant danger of losing.

Neil Menzies at the Commodore's Lodgings was waiting—not so much the unanimous "call" from a set of parishioners, as for the presentation from a

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patron to a living—in the meantime keeping himself in people's minds, and stimulating a patron's action by preaching here and there, before a patron, or in a church likely to be soon vacant.

Benjie Peebles was living at the schoolhouse on the old boarding terms. He did not know where else to go while he, too, was waiting until an assistantship to an elderly or invalided surgeon or physician turned up. In the meantime he was called by courtesy "the young doctor" or "Doctor Peebles," and he did some work in Kilcainie for a middle-aged medical man who had no objection to having his burden lightened, while he could not make up his mind to take a regular assistant. He was in the habit of saying and believing that his cases—generally among the poorer population—which Peebles attended, were good practice for his young friend, and were giving him experience. It would be a breach of professional etiquette for him to claim any other remuneration. Benjie knew he was out of harm's way (as he had not always been) at the Rowanden schoolhouse, and he had the saving grace to avail himself of the refuge—a little sourly perhaps—still, he did it. He was not without a sneaking kindness for the place which had honestly sheltered his childhood and youth, contending with a baseless grudge against it. He had a considerable respect and liking for the Master, at the same time that it irritated him to recognise the position in which Adam Pryde had stood, and still stood, to him, in being the deputy through whom Dr Menzies exercised the trust he held. Whatever virtues the Master possessed, he could not at that date be

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credited with magnanimity and generosity in wielding any power which fell to him. Possibly his calling of schoolmaster had intensified his propensity to hector as well as to rule, as he still sometimes did to Benjie, calling him to order, sitting upon him, cross-examining and heckling the grown man, the qualified practitioner, as he had done when the young doctor was a schoolboy figuratively sitting at his instructor's feet, in a manner which tried Benjie's small stock of patience to the uttermost. He used to find some consolation in telling himself that really the Master's son Jeames was the only young man with whom the Master could live at close quarters without any outbreak of unbearable tyranny on the one hand, and desperate rebellion on the other. Jeames was a fish, or a creature encased in an invulnerable shell of habitual well-doing and stolid content—moreover, the Master had a curious pride in Jeames, and a satisfaction with him as a product of his own teaching, an example of the very best made of his opportunities and of his moderate but eminently workable endowments. Pryde considered that not a scholar he had ever had, not Neil Menzies, who promised to be a learned and eloquent divine like his uncle; not Benjie Peebles, who had grappled with the mysteries of anatomy, physiology, chemistry and the entire pharmacopœia with success, in several instances with brilliance, had done him greater credit than his douce and diligent son Jeames.

To Mrs Pryde Benjie was indifferent, unless when her vulgarity grated on his susceptibilities. They had never had much to do with each other. Even

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as a boy she had had the perception to let him alone. Now, when his diploma and his full-blown professional status awoke her admiration, it was an admiration not untinged with awe, never pressed upon him, always entertained and expressed at a discreet distance. She certainly held him in higher estimation than she held her son, the result being that she was politely civil to Benjie and familiarly rude to Jeames. The parental instinct is not always blinding, or if it blinded Mrs Pryde it was not on the side of undue partiality. The fact was, she could discern wherever Benjie had excelled; she could not measure Jeames's attainments, which were not attended by any outward show. Old use and wont and their common college experience had rendered Benjie tolerant of Jeames's companionship. It might not be stimulating, it might be wearisome, but it was not without its restfulness, and boy and man it would have been difficult to quarrel with Jeames.

The relations between Benjie and Katie Pryde were of another description. As boy and girl they had, partly because of their likeness, squabbled continually. He had never done mocking and gibing at her, and she had not failed to resent the mocking and gibing. As the couple grew older and wiser all this was changed, and latterly, on every vacation when Benjie Peebles returned to Rowanden, he was struck with the alteration in Katie. She was growing up quite a beauty, she was interesting, without doubt. He lent her books and answered some of her questions. Unquestionably there were still sympathies between the somewhat saturnine young man and the perplexed,

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inclined to be satirically despondent, if not misanthropic, young woman. Her music attracted him. He had some musical talent himself—uncultivated unless when she gave him a hint or two from the superiority of her training. It was a pleasant recreation to try and accompany her, at leisure moments, and her present finding fault and his defending himself, even while he deferred to her, bore no resemblance to their former bickering.

In Katie's eyes Benjie grown up had just that shade of Byronic sombreness and thrilling uncertainty as to whether he had always been altogether what he should be, with his future fate for good or evil still hanging in the balance, which is irresistible to many—to most innocent girls. Why, even Marjorie of the Manse was conscious of a spell, though, as she had never had the provocation to view him as a horrible boy, so on her part there was no softening process of relenting and recanting in considering that there was something which drew you to the young man, and caused you to think twice about him. The mystery of his origin increased the effect.

To older, wiser people it simply meant, whatever the explanation, something discreditable, and not without casting an aspersion on Benjie, while he was the innocent victim, as coming of a bad stock. But to ignorant girls it carried with it a flavour of romance. They were not quite so silly as to think that Benjie Peebles was like a hero of a novel, some heir to rank and fortune kept out of his own by designing relatives for purposes of their own. But the circumstance, though somebody had

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provided for his education, that the somebody remained unknown, and no relatives came forward to claim and stand by the young doctor, and to congratulate him on having done so far well, gave him a loneliness, an aloofness which carried its own appeal to tender young hearts.

There was nothing, however, which went to the extent of love-making between Benjie Peebles and Katie Pryde in the case where propinquity was in evidence to lead to it. If the mutual attraction had gone so far, it would either have rushed to the legitimate conclusion, or been stamped out by the opposition it would have met at this date. Not till Dr Peebles had given hostages to fortune by being well established in a fairly extensive and remunerative practice would Mrs Pryde dream of him as a proper suitor for her daughter—and even then the Master might demur dourly without any clear explanation of his objections. As it was, there were counter attractions in either case, distracting both the woman and the man, and pulling each in an opposite direction. From the days when they sat on the benches of the Master's school Katie had cherished a secret intense admiration for Neil Menzies. Possibly in its juvenile beginning his pony, "muckle mou'ed Meg," the superiority of his jackets and the turned-over collars which Mrs Ord vexed his soul by maintaining so snowy and so shiny, had something to do with it. But while the pony and the jackets and collars faded out of it, the impression was not lessened when Neil came back from college and from Germany the real Simon Pure of a student, half

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eager, half dreamy, refined and spiritualised by the nature of his studies, more in earnest than most men of his age, courteous to all men and women with a gentle friendliness—for was not their salvation his concern?

And Neil, though a modest fellow, was not unaware of the impression he made on Katie Pryde, and not ungrateful for it. A subtle sense that she looked up to him, and liked him, increased the peculiar interest she was calculated to inspire. He wondered why her gravity had a strain of sadness—not to say of bitterness—in it. He was sorry if it was caused by her delicate health. He thought a good deal about it, and longed for her to have the peace and cheerfulness natural to her years. He, too, was arrested by her music, though he himself was not musical like Peebles. But Katie's music, which did not depend largely on brilliance of execution or profundity of knowledge, was of the kind which addresses a human audience and captivates it, whether its members have musical ears and training or lack them. To see and hear the young woman shake off her languor, which, while it became her, was disconcerting at times, and grow enthusiastic and radiant as she turned over her music, and then sing "The Flowers of the Forest," or "Robin Adair," or Hood's "I Remember," or "On the Banks of Allan Water," would bring moisture into the eyes and a lump into the throat of the most

Neil Menzies would have Katie Pryde learn as much German as would enable her to sing "Roselein Roth," and the story of the three *Burschen* who crossed over the Rhine, and asked the landlady

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the condition of her beer and wine, and especially of the little daughter who lay, alas! on her bier. And, above all, he would teach her that noblest hymn, "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott," which rang out its triumphant call like some of their Scotch psalms—like "All people that on earth do dwell," or "Why art thou then cast down, my soul?" or "I to the hills will lift mine eyes." He would be happy to impart to her the small amount of correct pronunciation—the little free translation, all that was necessary to enable her to sing the German songs as she sang those favourites of hers. Katie was more than gratified, though she could not understand his value for their psalms—droned distressingly as she was accustomed to hear them, through Alick Deuchar's nose.

And it was on the cards that the closer intimacy, the nearer, more constant subjection to Katie's attraction, with the seductive perception of his influence over her, might vanquish a young fellow simple and unworldly as Neil Menzies was, behind his cleverness. Thus, where the hero was gifted or afflicted with a chivalrous temper, the end, escaped in Katie's association with Benjie Peebles, might come to pass in a similar conjunction with Neil Menzies.

As for Benjie, with the perversity which makes a man desire the unattainable, the bright particular star beyond his reach, and partly because of the fascination in reverses, his fancy had winged its flight to Marjorie of the Manse, to appraising all her fine qualities which he was able to appreciate, to impressing upon himself what a woman such as

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she was might make of the man with whom she mated. How she would not only order all things duly for him, and accomplish for him the safest and pleasantest of homes, but how, freed from the heavy home obligations which she fulfilled so willingly and untiringly, she would enter heart and soul into his tastes and pursuits. For, cribbed, cabined and confined as her circumstances made her, any man with an eye in his head and a discerning brain could judge for himself, that the daughter of an intellectual father and a high-minded mother was not behind them in mental gifts and moral graces.

Having a dash of the poet—the Byronic poet—in his composition, poor Benjie had done all he could to foster this unsuitable penchant (an undying attachment, he thought fit to call it), of which its object had not the slightest idea, and only Katie Pryde—women like Katie being very wide awake with regard to such matters—had the faintest suspicion. For, though he was as proud as Lucifer, his very pride saved him from presumption. He kept his own counsel rigidly, exaggerating his symptoms and sentiments, and rather revelling in the high-flown conception of a devotion unrequited, unexpressed, in the style of the hero in the first phase of one of Katie's songs—to which he listened with a gloomy absorption — “He never told his love” — a fit termination to the melancholy fate of a miserable, unfortunate sinner such as he was. And after arriving at this gruesome conclusion, he would eat a hearty supper and sleep seven hours of dreamless sleep. But though the misery he hugged on occasions

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was self-imposed and three-fourths fantastic, it contained some grains of reality in a spirit wounded from the first, and driven into morbidness and frowardness.

Marjorie of the Manse had rejoiced at her cousin's return, but having grown up to regard him as very much her private property, she had been taken aback and considerably aggrieved and mortified at the first sign of being superseded by Katie Pryde. But Marjorie, at least, did not exaggerate. She did not let the supposed injury sink into her spirit; she did not mistake the simply cousinly affectionate terms she had been upon with Neil. Her mother had always warned her not to count on the continuance of the childish terms, and had reminded her that she was well-off in the possession of those brothers of her own, so that she was not dependent on a cousin's brotherliness. And Marjorie had believed her mother in spite of certain inopportune stings and smarts. There was one good thing, she had far too much to do and to think of, to brood on any diminution of the old boy and girl alliance between her and Neil. And Marjorie would scorn to be unfair to Katie Pryde because of any notion that Katie was eclipsing herself, and that two—actually whole two young men—that dark, handsome, over-sober but not undistinguished and by no means uninteresting Dr Peebles, who used to be clever, cross-grained Benjie Peebles, and Marjorie's cousin Neil—were showing an inclination to run after Katie. It was not Katie's fault; she was not a disgraceful flirt and coquette, not by any means. She was just what she could not help being—what nobody would wish her not to be—

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a pretty girl, with something unique about her, because of her disposition to quarrel with her good things and with life as it was. And she played and sang delightfully. No wonder people were pleased to hear her. Marjorie had done her best with her music, she could teach her sister Nelly, and her father liked to hear her at family worship and odd spare moments; but she knew very well that she could not hold the candle to Katie—some musical timbre was wanting in her. Marjorie did not mean to pretend that Katie Pryde was perfection, she, Marjorie, knew Katie's faults well enough, and she did *not* think her a fit wife for Neil Menzies, or a woman likely to make a good and happy wife for any minister. But the choice did not lie with Marjorie; it lay with Neil. It was his business, not Marjorie's, and he was surely able to manage his own business, especially on so vital a question as the choice of a wife. The Commodore would be disappointed, and so would her father and mother in a less degree; but they would get over their disappointment, as so many people had to do.

Such was Marjorie of the Manse's heart-whole philosophy, and if there were a few holes in it, is not that to be said of most systems of philosophy?

There is room for a remark on the degree of intimacy which existed between the younger members of the Manse and the schoolhouse households, while their elders, though on friendly terms—ostensibly friendly even with Mrs Pryde—had not dreamt of holding more intercourse than was necessary in their respective positions. But various causes had broken down the barriers where they had to do with the

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young people—scarce in Rowanden—and it is the nature of the creatures to be social, to crave contact and lively passages-at-arms with their fellows. School and college had brought them together in the first place, and in the second they were more each other's equals in culture and tastes, in their common constraining youth than the members of the elder generation were to this day.

Then an event happened which for the moment occupied everybody's attention to the exclusion of more ordinary and what appeared more trivial interests. The death occurred of an old and little-known relative as far off as London, and the Commodore entered on an inheritance none too soon, for he had been spending money at a great rate, speaking by comparison, on his son's education, for the last ten years, nothing was to be stinted on the boy, no advantage was to be denied to him. The Commodore was not a man of the world, not practical or business-like in his calculations, and his son was, if anything, less so, thus the father gave and Neil accepted without a second thought, to the concern of those who looked on, understood and cared. The Doctor, the Commodore's own brother, was not credited with an extra supply of worldly wisdom, but he had seen more of life than had come in the way of Alan Menzies. He, Archie Menzies, had not spent half of his life on board ship, apart from the modes of traffic of his kind. He had got anxious about his brother, though he could not approach him in the matter of interfering with his expenditure on his son. Alan had always been reticent on his affairs, had always gone his own way, and Neil was the apple of his eye.

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The Doctor got from Mrs Ord, who was his cousin as well as Alan's, whom illness was rendering both timorous and peevish, a glimpse behind the scenes at the Commodore's Lodgings. It pointed to the straitened circumstances which the household were experiencing, the stern acts of self-denial which the master of the house was practising, the refusing himself the single glass of wine which he had been accustomed to take with his dinner and supper for years, the cutting off of his *Blackwood* from his account with the Kilcairn bookseller—an intellectual loss to the Manse hardly less than to the Commodore's Lodgings. Marjorie, on being examined on the point, confirmed ruefully Mrs Ord's tale, admitted her reason for carrying off the weekly numbers of *Chambers's Journal* so soon as they were read, to be laid on her uncle's table, and confessed that he had bound her over by a word of warning not to report these small changes at the Manse, so long as she could help doing so. He had found the wine disagreeing with his stomach. He was tiring of *Blackwood*. Worse was to come. A chance word dropped about a bill stamp betrayed to the Doctor that the Commodore was borrowing money or drawing bills in anticipation of his pay, and what the end would be to a man of scrupulous honour, with so few resources, the Doctor dared not trust himself to think. Occasionally, when the pinching at the Manse was sorest, he had been tempted to appeal for the "accommodation" which meant temporary aid, with the shadow of what might be ultimate ruin to both men peering over it, but on reflection and by the urgent advice of his wife when she was consulted, he and his "tholed" and refrained

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from drawing his brother into debt which he might not discharge without a desperate struggle. It would be all very well if Neil were soon inducted into a parish and living, he was the last man to let his father suffer on his account. But even then there would be the new Manse, Neil's Manse, to furnish, and young men, whether ministers or laymen, were always so unreasonable in wanting to marry on the first opportunity. The Doctor stopped to laugh when he came to this point in his reflections. Had not he himself been one of those unreasonable young men? And if he had it to do again he believed he would do it, unless he were deterred by a sudden passion of remorse for Mary's pale closed lips and work-worn hands, which, if they ever came to be discussed, she would staunchly make light of.

But deliverance was at hand. A modest fortune—of which there had been an anticipation too vague and unconfirmed for reasonable men and women to build upon it—had come to the Commodore. It was nothing very great or splendid, but it would clear him of all the obligations he had rashly incurred, restore the Commodore's Lodgings to a good deal more than their old slightly austere comfort and independence, suffer him to pass his declining years in dignity and peace, and leave a comfortable nest egg for Neil.

"I'm so pleased for Alan," said the Doctor, flinging a letter into his wife's lap and rubbing his hands gleefully, when the two were together in the privacy of his study. "The lawyer's letter came last night, and Alan has forwarded it to me this morning. I'm sorry Uncle Eben is gone, and I hope all was well with him,

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but I only saw him once, an age ago, before you and I met, my dear. Latterly he would not even take the trouble of keeping up a correspondence with the younger members of his family, but he has remembered them, poor body, in the way which he doubtless thought was the most substantial and satisfactory, he has kept his old half promise to make Alan his heir. And now Alan will be easy, body and mind. He'll have his old quiet, untroubled life which he liked come back. He was knocked about in his younger days. A sailor's life—especially if he is a sailor in the navy, who is always liable to be called on to fight our battles, as well as to endure every variety of climate, and face all the dangers of shipwreck and destruction by fire, which those who go down into the deep have to encounter every day of their existence—is a hard life. The more reason they should have a time of rest, a season in the land of Beulah, before they pass hence and are no more seen by mortal eyes," he ended meditatively.

"Your Uncle Eben was that brother of your father's who went south and settled in London. He got on the Stock Exchange and made money. I mind all about him though I never saw him, or heard you speak much of him. He drifted away from his family in the lang syne and had little or no connection with them."

She repeated the particulars in such correct detail that it seemed as if she must at one time have laid them up in her heart, as the care-laden mother of a family, and had her day-dreams about them. This sounded more probable when she added with some significance the next moment, sighing as she spoke,—

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"The Commodore is not the only surviving member of your father's family."

"No, indeed," he replied with a laugh, "there is your humble servant here, as large as life, and Auntie Forsyth, whom the laddies are with—only Uncle Eben paid little heed to our numbers and our standing from first to last, he only came once back to Scotland to look up his kith and kin. But the funny thing is that he never so much as set eyes on Alan, who was gone to sea before the visit was paid. I was studying for the ministry, which Uncle Eben said was a poor trade that would never pay. He wanted to turn me from it. He wanted me to go back with him to London where he would get me a berth in a business-house and make a man of me. I believe he had some words with my father about it, and left rather in dudgeon, and that it was then he said if he did not marry—he was a bachelor at the time and had no children of his own (he did marry but there were no children)—he would leave what he had earned to my brother, the middy, for though there was little gear to be gathered in the service, there was glory, which was more than could be said of the ministry."

"Certainly not the glory that he meant," she said in a lower tone.

He was silent for a minute, thinking and getting graver, and then he stepped closer to where she sat and looked down into her face wistfully,—

"If Uncle Eben's legacy had been divided by three it would not have come to much in any well-to-do man's estimation. I do not say that we would not have been the better of it as it is, and there have

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been times, Mary, when we would have caught at it as the drowning man catches at the last straw between him and death. But thanks to your gallant courage and fidelity, my dear, surely the worst is passed for us. The laddies are helping themselves, and will soon be helping others. Duncan and Simmie will take bursaries in their turn and go in for teaching likewise. If anything were to happen to me, I would not be feared to leave you and Marjorie and Nelly to the care of the boys."

"You need not be, Archie"—she looked up with the old dauntless pride and spirit—"I trust the day is far distant when we're to lose you from our head, but, come when it likes, if I've breath and sense left, I'll play my part still for the bairns. Man, can you not guess it would be my best earthly consolation, coming next to that heavenly one that the good and faithful servant has gone to the Master who kens him better even than I ken him, that has been his wife for more than a score of years, and maybe, if the Lord will, for a score of years longer, till we're both tottering at the grave's mouth. As for the girls, I own Nellie is a bittie soft and feckless, wanting looking after, and looking up to, and taking care of; still, she'll grow harder and stronger as she grows older, and, please God, she'll never need to stand alone—there are so many of us. But Marjorie—why, Archie, you are not giving her sex and mine the honour that is its due if you do not see she is as good as any laddie for the family, na, I'm not sure that she is not the best laddie among us."

"I'm not gainsaying that we're well off in Marjorie," said her father, his face kindling with pride

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and pleasure, "and Allan has only the boy—a fine boy, no doubt, but standing alone—I trust the Almighty will spare him that is so precious to his poor father. And since our quiver is so well filled," he continued coaxingly, "you'll not lament that paltry pickle of money which has passed us by?"

"What!" she cried disdainfully, "lament what was never ours—what neither Providence nor man designed for us, what is but sillar, which we can do without in the future, as we've done in the past, and, as you say rightly, the heaviest part of the task we set ourselves, and had set for us, is accomplished. What a silly, faithless, pingin' woman I would be were I to begin to lament and complain at this time of the day. You in health fit for your pulpit and parish work, and your literary work forby, and the bairns all spared to us and, please the Lord, likely to do well. Archie, we've a deal to be thankful for."

"That we have," he assented eagerly, "and poor Alan has a deal more need of the bequest than ever we had. We contrived to keep out of debt even when the sky looked blackest. When five of the bairns were down with fever—Marjorie among them—and Bell's mother died, and the doctor threatened me with your falling into a decline if you would not take more rest and nourishment, and Marjorie was so weak that when she slipped out of her bed to help you, she could not keep her feet, but fell on the floor, where she lay and grat herself sick in her weakness, yet we kept out of debt. I'm not boasting, Mary, I'm not taking credit to myself," he pleaded, as if she had cause to accuse him. "It was little I could do but wander up and down the house, after I had

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put the bedclothes on this one and given his medicine to that other, like a man gone out of his wits."

"And live on cold porridge, and tea that had stood till it was drawn fit to poison you, for days and days," she put in, with a choke in her voice.

"I? What did it matter for me? Nothing ailed me, I was as strong as a horse, and yet I could do so little to help you, but God was merciful and everybody was kind. Alan came over and would have sat up night after night, and he brought Sailor Bill with his wooden leg to hop about and do the cooking, since Menie Ord was feared out of her wits to come near you, and he was fain that she should stay out of the way with Neil. Then your bfother and sisters heard of our strait, and Lossiemuir, God bless him, sent a ten-pound note and a dozen of his best port, and your sister Agnes sent a nurse, who came laden with all manner of food and dainties for the sick, and your sister Caroline made dressing-gowns for all the bairns that they soon grew away from. But the fur tippet she sent to you was what you made me sit up with round my shoulders when I had my lumbago, and you're wearing it to this day. And our farmer bodies—kind creatures! you mind we did not ken what to make of the potatoes and neeps, the apples and bags of flour they heaped upon us. We did not sink into debt, you see, because of all these friends raised up to us, and because there were two of us to take counsel together and stand out, and devise how we could hold in here and do without there. As for poor Alan, he lost his wife the year after their marriage, and he is tongue-tied even to Neil. I'm right glad Uncle Eben kept his

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word, and that Alan, honest man, has got the wind-fall, which will clear him of his embarrassments and set him on his feet for the rest of his life."

Mrs Menzies looked in her husband's radiant face and smiled also with a smile that had both humour and pathos in it.

"Archie Menzies, you are a disinterested man," she said, "and, being what you are, it would be strange if you spoke otherwise than you do, while the disinterested man is just a different term for the simple man, and you will find plenty of folk to tell you that the simple man is the beggar's brother. But I hold he's a brother the beggar and the rich man alike may be proud of. I'm neither reduced to beggary, nor am I a rich woman in the sense of silver and gold; but I'm real proud of my gifted, simple man—I have no fault to find with his simplicity, it befits and sets off his abilities, it befits and sets off his calling, eh! Archie?"

So Neil Menzies, in place of giving Katie Pryde lessons in German, in order that she might sing the German songs and hymns which had taken his fancy, was packed off to London in order to wait there till his grand-uncle's affairs were settled, and in the meantime to be occupied with new sights and new experiences.

CHAPTER III

ROWANDEN DISSIPATION

THE chief Rowanden dissipation in winter and early spring, apart from the New Year, when there were special meetings and greetings among kinsfolk and intimate friends, was when Rowanden Loch—a sheet of water three miles round, conveniently situated half-way between Rowanden village and Kilcairnie—was frozen, and the whole neighbourhood, including large contingents from Kilcairnie, assembled to take advantage of the ice. The centre of attraction consisted of the curling matches, which went on so long as the frost lasted, from morning to night. Skating was little practised then except by a few better equipped boys—the small people in general had their glassy slides for an exhilarating enough diversion at one end of the loch. But its business was curling, carried on by men of ages ranging from eighteen or nineteen to hard on three score and ten, and of every rank from the Lord of the Manor—if he did not happen to be an absentee—and might be his Grace the Duke, or his Lordship the Earl, down to a working mason or a journeyman plasterer. Never was there such a leveller as the game of curling. Cricket was nothing to it, for cricket was not for men much past their prime; besides, cricket was little

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played in Scotland in the thirties and forties. Golf could not come within a long distance of it, in far and wide good fellowship, for golf was played in summer when there was neither opportunity nor excuse for working men quitting their work and giving themselves up to play. But in the depths of winter, when the earth was iron-bound, whole trades were at a standstill, with the men who followed them let loose for a period of weeks. Masons, bricklayers, plumbers, plasterers, etc., came under this head, and some of their representatives were notable curlers. And the game of bowls upon the ice seemed to exercise an irresistible fascination, helped as it was by the bracing cold. Sometimes the game saw the clear sunshine sink into the red sunset giving place to the blue, cold moonlight and the golden stars twinkling and scintillating in the purple vault overhead. The grey rink with its crowd of muffled figures moving rapidly to and fro in cheery excitement was charmed ground. The polished granite stones, frequently mounted in silver, held a spell of their own as they skimmed along the smooth surface, and were heard for a distance of miles with the reverberating sound of prolonged thunder peals, or of the rumbling of an avalanche. And blithest detail of all were the heather brooms used with a will to sweep away any powdering of snow which might interfere with the course of the game, by eager men rushing before the glissading stone. But the brooms were quite as often employed in being frantically flourished above the owners' heads as an accompaniment to the shouts of triumph which hailed the safe arrival of a stone at the goal, or the happy hit which displaced an enemy's

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stone from its well-planned and skilfully gained position in proximity to its aim. Surely no unprejudiced lookers-on at a Scotch curling match could retain the delusive impression, common among other nations, of the Scotch as a hopelessly glum and gloomy people.

It would have been positively unpatriotic on a small scale, destitute of all proper interest in, and sympathy with, the credit of the parish in one of its national games, not to have visited the loch in its season of bustle and gaiety, all the more valued because a day might end it. Nobody knew when the frost would give way, sloppy pools of water appear on the rink, and the danger of cracking, splitting, rotten ice soon leave the place vacant. Then the birch and fir trees in the vicinity wept dejected showers from their melting twigs and spines, and the very blue hills in the background grew blurred and dim. But it was not as a mere looker-on, however interested, that Dr Menzies appeared on the scene. He was one of the most enthusiastic and expert curlers in the district. If he was surpassed by any man in the parish it was by the beadle, Rab Rae. The Doctor sniffed a keen frost coming into the air, as a war-horse rises to the blast of the trumpet and scents the battle from afar. At the first joyous rumour that the ice was bearing, not a boy in the parish was more elated than was his minister. His sermon-writing was laid aside till the evening, when, no doubt, he went rather stiff to the task. His statistical contributions remained buried in his desk drawer. Only one thing diverted him from being

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present at the loch, and that was a thing which, well or ill, he had never been known to neglect, the call to the sick and dying. If the sick were considerate, and that particular time had not been appointed for souls to take their flight, the Doctor sallied forth to tramp the three miles in his well-worn overcoat. The "comforter" or cravat Marjorie had knitted for him was wrapped round his throat. The woollen mittens which the oldest woman in the parish made for him, and Marjorie darned so cleverly that no darn could be distinguished, preserved the circulation in his numbed fingers. And his pocket held a packet of bread and cheese and a flask of ginger wine, put there by Mrs Menzies to serve for his luncheon. The moon was up and the stars were out by the time he returned.

Whatever other match he graced, he was sure to play in that match between the married and single men of the parish-players for a sum of money which always went to the kirk-session for the Rowanden poor. Once a year—neither his purse nor his scanty sport time permitted him to repeat the expedition—he drove to the inn in Kilcairnie to say the grace at the curlers' dinner. It was as rigidly limited to "salt beef and greens" as if the curlers were in the middle of a campaign—in reality in order that the poor as well as the rich might share in it—and as immutably fixed as were the laws of the Medes and Persians. He would sit an hour afterwards, drink one tumbler of toddy, and join merrily in that curious traditional curlers' game bearing so strong a resemblance to "High Jinks," as played by Edinburgh lawyers in the days

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of Sir Walter Scott and his king of lawyers, Pleydell. Then the minister would drive home, bringing all the news of the day, in good time for supper and family worship at the Manse.

The Commodore, a lover and faithful adherent to precedent, was a regular attendant at the loch when it was frozen—a curler, too, but though he had known bowls played on the deck of his ship, his performances were of much less merit and renown than was that of his reverend brother.

When the men of the countryside thus displayed their peaceful prowess, it was a point of honour as well as a source of pleasure to the matrons and maidens belonging to them that they should go forth to witness and applaud their kinsmen's feats. Accordingly, there was a fine show of warm colours, beaver bonnets and furs. Marjorie's fur was white down plucked from the slain geese of the glebe last New Year, and worked by her skilful hands like so many soft snowflakes into bands and squares of linen, lined with the remains of a silk gown of her mother's, and manufactured into collarettes and muffs for herself and her sister Nelly. Katie Pryde's furs were of golden brown fitch. The women made gay the usually still, grey loch. Nay, when the great day came round, and Rowanden Loch had its turn in being the spot where the great Caledonian match between representatives of clubs from John o' Groats to the Cheviots was played, carriages, dog-carts, conveyances of every description brought, to say not merely the wives of the provost and bailies and of the professional men and richer tradesmen of Kilcairnie, but county ladies in their

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ermine and sable which they wore as to the manner born, not only casting a girl like Katie into the shade, but filling her with a mixture of wonder, awe, and envy. How did life go with them, she questioned? Were they perplexed with its contradictions and complications? Had they so many and such appropriate and fitting engagements that time never hung heavy on their hands? Did no jarring notes, no conflict between their better selves and their surroundings—not only their surroundings—between themselves and those whom they were bound by every sacred tie to honour and love as well as to obey, mar the peace and happiness of their elegant homes?

Of course Neil Menzies—tearing himself from his books, and Benjie—making as short work as humanity and professional duty would permit with his honorary appointment—so far as pay went—for the relief of the Kilcairn doctor, and using his long legs as seven-leagued boots to carry him in a twinkling over the intervening miles, were present on the loch. They were at the girls' service to tell them how the games were going, to pilot them across the most slippery portions of the ice, to beg Marjorie and Katie not to be absent and so withhold their encouragement from the two young men when they were playing in the match between the parishes of Rowanden and Kininmonth. Neil won a glad and grateful smile from Marjorie by saying he would be more certain of the result if his Uncle Archie had been to play. None of them, neither he nor Peebles there, could send his stone as unerringly as her father sent it.

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And Katie turned away in bitterness of spirit. Why were her father and brother schoolmasters and not ministers like Dr Menzies and his nephew Neil? The Master and the little Master were shut up in stuffy schoolrooms, with a crowd of discontented children, who would give their ears to have their share of the jolly doings which John Frost was bringing to pass on the loch, to warm cold toes on the slides, to blister their lips sucking icicles, to look on and watch proudly their fathers and brothers playing in the same game with the "gentles," to secure the reversion of some generous curler's lunch. To tell the truth, Katie was rather given to relegating the Master and Jeames to the school, and not caring to withdraw them from the scene of their daily labours, seeing that these, her "men-folk," did not strike her as shining and doing her credit in any other sphere. But to have Marjorie's father's prowess in the game commended, and that by Neil Menzies, and to know that her father and brother were prevented by cruel fortune—by their lower station, their particular calling—from so much as entering the lists, was a mortification.

Presently Katie had an experience of a different kind which tended to reconcile her to the first source of annoyance. Mrs Pryde, whom Katie had left at home lazily enjoying her usual afternoon nap, in the warmth of her hearth, was surprised by an old Kilcairnie acquaintance. She was getting a lift in a market cart to the loch, and only looked in at the schoolhouse in going by, in order to persuade, as she succeeded in doing, her former friend to accompany her to the spectacle of the day. Mrs Pryde donned

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her gayest bonnet—that with the clusters of orange auricula—as well as the lilac feathers nodding above the crown, and her crimson Paisley shawl to hide all flaws of her every-day home gown, and sped to the play.

Arrived on the ground, she startled Katie disagreeably by immediately rendering herself one of the most conspicuous persons in the crowd. She had lost her head and her pretensions to dignified gentility for the moment. She called from some distance, with noisy jocularly, to her daughter, to ask if she knew who her mother was, and how she had come there? She screamed at every step on the ice, and clutched at any man who came near her. Happily her friend's stay could not be long. And the cold air causing Mrs Pryde's florid colour to darken to purple, her round cheeks to glow and tingle unpleasantly, and the water to stand like the rheum of age in her smarting eyes, detracted from a sensuous, self-indulgent woman's enjoyment, so that the clumsy, gaudy figure vanished almost as quickly as it had presented itself. Only it did not carry away with it all the remorseful pain and vexation it had excited.

Neil Menzies was an exception to there being no grown-up skaters. He had learnt to skate in Germany, but he denied himself the pleasure of skimming like a bird from end to end of the ice, or of showing off his accomplishment, which was not his way, in order to make it the means of pleasure to two other people. He skated quickly to the side of the loch, borrowed a chair from a cottage close by, requested Marjorie or Katie—he did not seem to mind which—to be seated in it, and quietly propelled the girls in turn in a pleasant and easy progress round the loch.

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"Why, Neil, I did not count on enjoying carriage exercise," cried Marjorie, merrily.

And "Oh! Mr Menzies, I am afraid I'm fatiguing you with my weight," languished Katie, giving a backward glance at him out of her lustrous eyes.

"Not a bit," he answered stoutly. "You are as light as a feather. Now one has some sense of substance with Marjorie; I wish you were like her in that respect. By the way, why don't you call me 'Neil,' as she does? We were all children together under your father's rod—or tawse—all Marjories, and Katies, and Neils, and Benjies."

There was something about this speech which Katie did not quite like. She did not care to be advised to resemble Marjorie of the Manse, even in desirable substantiality. While Katie acknowledged Marjorie's superiority, she did not like to be classed with her, as if they were just two in a regiment of girls. The girl had an instinctive perception that such classing was not a good sign of any growing partiality for herself over Marjorie, unless Neil Menzies was deeply hypocritical, which she was aware he was not. She did not think it was good taste in him to refer to her father's insignia of office and his position of dominie, though she had sufficient acquaintance with her old schoolfellow to be sensible that he was the last man to set store on social distinctions, or to regard them as other than matters of course. She did not look round again with an appealing, rewarding glance. Neil Menzies was all very well—nice-looking, gentlemanlike, about to be a full-blown minister with a parish and manse of his own, which was a position by no means to be

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despised—but these were not reasons for her to waste her glances on an unimpressed young man. Why, even Benjie, in spite of his stupid admiration for the unconscious Marjorie, would have made another response to her look. And Benjie's was a better figure of a man than Neil Menzies' with his lower stature and his student's stoop; and she rather thought she preferred a dark complexion in a man—though it approached to swarthiness—it was so much manlier than a whitey-brown face and hair like a girl's. Dr Peebles would have had more judgment than dwell on her father's occupation, which she was inclined to think would have been honourable enough if it had not been for that horrid pair of tawse, to which Neil had referred laughingly. Benjie—Dr Peebles—knew that there were references in conversation which he did not care to encounter, though he carried them off with a high hand of haughty inattention and blank indifference. These were references to a man's relations, his origin, and the rest of it. His own experience taught him caution; but Neil Menzies spoke out what was passing through his mind with the transparency and heedlessness of a schoolboy. Yet Neil was good with the goodness, the grace, which fitted him to be a minister, Katie reflected with a sudden reaction, in which there was a tinge of reverence not unmixed with awe.

When the shadows were lengthening, the rime beginning to fall, the cold increasing, and all who were not swallowed up in the glorious excitement of a match were turning their faces homewards, the two young men and the girls still lingered over their

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parting at the lochside, from which Benjie would naturally accompany Katie home, and Neil would walk with Marjorie as far as their roads lay together, to the mouth of the Den which held the Commodore's Lodgings. Or, if he thought the darkness was descending too rapidly, or that his father and Mrs Ord would not wait tea for him, he would convoy her, scouting her remonstrances, as far as the Manse gate.

The pause at the lochside was to arrange an important traffic which served frequently as a reason and excuse for bringing the party together. Neil Menzies was "taking out"—that is, buying and receiving number by number—from the bookseller in Kilcairnie, Dickens's last serial, which happened to be *Barnaby Rudge*, and Benjie was receiving in a similar series from the same quarter, Lever's *Charles O'Malley*. What piece of attention paid to the girls could have afforded them so much pleasure as did the lending and exchanging of these numbers as soon as possible after they reached their owners? The practice not only promoted numerous meetings between young people who, at this date, were little more to each other than old acquaintances somewhat transformed by turning up in the new guise of grown-up young people, and a little lonely in a quiet country place. They were inclined to be friendly, and, in the inextinguishable buoyance of their years, to provoke each other—though one of them was a licensed probationer waiting for a charge—to spurts of boy and girl gaiety, harmless frolics, saucy flouts and what not.

Barnaby Rudge started endless discussions on the

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charms of "Dolly Varden" and the merits of "Joe Willet." Pity for "Barnaby" was not lacking, nor amusement at the feats of "Grip." The girls were inclined to repudiate "Miggs"—they did not know, they had never known, so silly and hateful an old maid. "Sir John Chester" was detestable. He should have suffered instead of poor, wild, desperate "Hugh." The frantic license of the Gordon Riots took the readers' breath away. They were always in a state of eager craving for the next number, and could not tell how they were to wait a month, before their curiosity should be appeased and their interest and sympathy gratified. Marjorie of the Manse had been known to rise at five o'clock in the morning, on what was going to be one of her busy days, for the purpose of finishing the number in hand, and sending it on to Katie by Duncan and Simmie on their way to school—a dangerous temptation. For, just as Marjorie herself had been forced to read snatches from the chapters to Bell as she was lighting the fires, Duncan and Simmie took it upon them to loiter on the way to school, Duncan reading aloud choice bits to Simmie till they were so late for their classes that both of them were "kept in" after school hours, and the leathern instrument so hateful to Katie's refinement was put into practice for poor Simmie.

Katie reported on her side that she had caught her father laughing, she might say guffawing, over the "dear gazelle" who was sure to "marry a market-gardener." As for Jeames, whose boast was that he never read a novel, he hardly made an exception for one or two of the "Waverleys," on the

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whole he preferred his history. What was the explanation of the alarm she had suffered on the mysterious disappearance of the number in circulation? It had been basely purloined before she herself had read it—she to whom it was lent—and the culprit was exposed when, after a scouring search, Jeames had been forced to produce it from his locked school-room desk. It was not at all wonderful that the Doctor, who was a literary man himself, in the light of those contributions to the statistical history of Scotland, who could repeat “screeds” from Sir Walter’s “Lady of the Lake” and “Marmion,” and from Burns’s “Cottar’s Saturday Night,” ay, and his “Tam o’ Shanter,” should sit down openly and unabashed, and read the number from end to end with the greatest enjoyment. But that Marjorie’s mother should find means to do more than peep into the numbers, and should beg her—Marjorie—to tell her—Mrs Menzies—what she had missed while the two sat over their sewing, was not the least of the marvels.

“And I believe Neil reads the wonderful story aloud to Uncle Alan and Mrs Ord, and when he would stop they are always for him to go on, though the clock has struck ten. I’ll tell you what it is,” ended Marjorie, “this is the way of it, if we in Scotland have had our Wizard of the North, they across the Borders are thinking they are upsides with us. Oh, no! not nearly that, for Mr Dickens has written no poetry to speak of, and he has not the strong man’s grasp over English, and Scotch, and French, Jew and Gentle alike, of our Sir Walter. But nobody will deny that in addition to their grand Shakespeare

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and Milton, who fill the seats of the mighty, they have a magician of the South who does not disdain to come in and sit down at the homeliest fireside, and crack to the labouring men though they are fools, and to the women and bairns, as well as to the wise grey-beards."

Lever was not such a success, to Benjie's surprise and a little to his pique. True, he and Katie Pryde relished the brimming over fun of Frank Weber, Fred Power, Mikey Free, without doubt or scruple. Marjorie of the Manse, though she laughed too, did it with a reservation. She followed suit where the two ministers—the old and the young, her father and her cousin Neil—guardians of public morals, were concerned. The Doctor shook his head and put down the number. He liked to read about the Peninsular War, and he made every allowance for youth and high spirits and campaigning, but there were too many of what read like drunken orgies. The Scotch were such heinous sinners in the matter of drink, that he took shame to himself, in the light of his nationality, when he made the objection. Still, there it was, and he trusted if the clever, rollicking story fell into the hands of Charlie and Hughie, they would read it with a saving pinch of salt to qualify its attractions. Neil agreed with his uncle, only his condemnation was more severe, as the goodness of the young has, as a rule, a deeper tinge of austerity, before their charity has grown larger and become mellowed by experience.

Marjorie, like her father, was pleased to have vivid glimpses of the Peninsular War, the last great war

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in which England had engaged, as from an eye-witness. But while she left other people to deal with the intemperate habits of the hero and his friends, she could not away with the succession of love affairs of

“The false young knight
Who loves and who rides away.”

Where was the whole-hearted devotion to the one woman in the man which lasted till death—and Marjorie trusted death did not end, it only stamped it with the seal of eternity, the love which was honest, from the touch of the hand and the glance of the eye to the heart's core—the love which made all other women, save the one, like mothers and sisters, sacred, in a sense, for the one woman's sake, set apart from the profanation of idle, heartless love-making. There was only one kind of love worthy of the name. What could women see where love was so much as whispered, in a light-minded, fickle, shallow young fellow like this Charlie O'Malley? It did not signify though he fought like a lion or a fisticuffs in the wars, and rode like a Centaur in the hunting field? But it was a case of like man like woman. The entire book, gay, bright, brilliant, was written on another plane than Marjorie of the Manse cared to find herself upon. She would rather read the new book which had not come out in a series, but was a purchase of Neil Menzies, by the countryman whom he held to be so wonderful a searcher after truth, that *Hero Worship* by Thomas Carlyle, with which her father and Neil were so taken, while the Commodore was discontented and displeased with it. Katie read it likewise and liked it, and

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borrowed from Benjie Peebles an earlier book by the same author, *Sartor Resartus*, which repelled Marjorie, for she had none of Katie's sardonic speculativeness, any more than her neurotic sentimentality. The word neurotic was not heard then, and the science or philosophy of theosophy was confined to the Mahatmas in Central Asia. And Marjorie of the Manse was neither a learned blue-stocking, nor an embryo Madame de Stael, nor a Mary Wolstoncroft, not to say a Madame Blavatsky, simply an intelligent, country-bred girl, fairly large-minded, with a warm, loyal heart. She was fain to take refuge with another writer, the high-souled, believing mason among the marvels of his old "red sandstone."

As the party were at last quitting the loch and saying good-bye, on taking to the high road, Katie Pryde, scanning the road and seeing two figures emerging out of the gathering dusk, asked in sheer carelessness,—

"Who are those people coming along there?"

In accordance with the question the three others faced round and stared in the same direction. Had it been otherwise, had their eyes been disengaged and taking note of each other, someone might have observed the next instant a curious quiver pass like lightning over Benjie's broad shoulders like the quiver of a horse's nostrils when he encounters an object he dreads and cannot escape.

"It is the Daft Wives of Rowanden," said Neil, peering into the near distance, as the grey, bent figures emerged out of the uncertain light and drew nearer.

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"Poor creatures," murmured Marjorie, pitifully, as the bare-headed, bare-footed, bowed, elderly women, looking neither to right nor to left, their dull eyes fastened on the ground, tramped heavily past.

"They seem hardly human," said Katie, with a shiver. "I should not like to meet them by myself on a lonely road."

"Why, the miserable wretches were never guilty of any any act of violence, so far as I have heard," cried Benjie Peebles, with an odd strain of fierce protest in his tone.

"It would be more correct to apply the term wretches to the wicked men of whom these miserable women have been the prey and are the wreck," was Neil Menzies' indignant amendment.

But something in Peebles' voice had called attention to him, and his companions perceived he was livid—lividness in the case of his swarthy complexion presenting an alarming leaden-like pallor.

"Are you ill, Peebles? What ails you? Have you swallowed some of your own drugs by mistake?"

"Did you walk too fast coming over from Kilcainie?"

"There are plenty of people here with flasks of brandy and whisky and stuff—if we only knew who they were and where to find them," hailed him from Neil and Marjorie, and from Katie an eager pleading.

"Oh! come along, Benjie, walking will not hurt you. Perhaps you will feel better as you go on, and if you get giddy I can take your arm—it will steady you, at least. We will be at the schoolhouse in no time, and mother will have hot tea and make you lie down."

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"Nothing ails me, I tell you. What nonsense are you all worrying about?" Benjie protested impatiently, resentfully, and as the colour was returning to his lips, and the dead leaden hue had passed from the rest of the face, the onlookers began to think some delusive effect of light, together with a little natural fatigue, had given the young man for an instant the ghastly appearance which had startled the onlookers. They took him at his word, forgot the fright they had got, and went their respective ways, according to their earlier intention, as if nothing had happened.

CHAPTER IV

A NEW DISSIPATION IN SPRING

THE early spring was at Rowanden blowing in the east winds, shining in the high, bright, by no means warm sun, and heartily welcome in its brightening daylight, and in its skies blue, if still wan and chill. For it was yet so early in the year that tufts of pure pale snowdrops and clusters of creamy buds and blossoms, where the laurustinus bushes stood in sheltered corners were about the only flowers which had made their appearance in garden and shrubbery. In the fields there was not even a pinched, crimson-tipped daisy, while the grass was of the whitey-green—almost grey—tint which it assumes after it has been sodden by winter rains, bitten by New Year frosts and well-nigh swept out of existence by tearing February gales. But spring was in the air, bringing a long trail of beauties and joys in its wake—golden crocuses, amber daffodils, yellow wallflowers, “stained with iron brown,” blue periwinkles, young lambs, young calves, larks hovering over the pasture in which their nests lay, merles and mavis (may the English reader forgive me, *black-birds and thrushes*) in the budding hedges—on and on till the rosy apple-blossom of May, and “the red, red rose of June.”

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This year and for years before all Scotland was astir with a strife which was fast coming to a climax. It affected gentle and simple alike, for Scotland and her Kirk are one. Every church throughout the land rang with the conflict between the two great parties—the Non-intrusionists and the Moderates—into which the Church was divided, on the question of the presentation of ministers to parishes by the mode of unqualified and unchecked Patronage.

Rowanden and the neighbouring parishes were not left out in the contention which was convulsing the Kirk to its centre, as an earthquake shakes a doomed town to its foundations. Week after week deputations from the Non-intrusionist headquarters, or single men of mark in the party, arrived by coach or gig, or more imposing post-chaise, sparing neither trouble nor fatigue, nor even expense, in spite of national thrift, that no outlying district might be overlooked, no chance missed of swelling the ranks of the opposition to the decrees of the Government and the law courts. For the Moderates had the Cabinet and the Court of Session at their back, while the Non-intrusionists had only the popular approbation to support their unfaltering faith and dauntless spirit. Week after week—not on the Lord's Day, when public discussion on the subject was reverently dropped by common consent, but on any week night, when all classes were free, able speaking urged the rights of the Church and the people, in the solemnity of the little grey pre-Reformation churches, or in the hardy independence of the austere bare parish schoolrooms.

Week after week the parishioners, high and low,

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flocked to the meetings held in their own and in adjoining parishes, the most of the people walking miles by moonlight or lantern light, along rough by-roads, in the chill night air, when, if the rain did not drizzle, or the last snow of the season threaten to obliterate their footprints, and cause them to lose their way, the bitter east wind searched the weak places in their wraps, and pierced them to the marrow. Their goal reached, the wayfarers would sit for not less than an hour and a half or two hours—often twice as long—in the mouldering damp of unheated churches, or the draughty precincts of equally unheated schoolrooms, whose doors and windows were made to open and shut, but with no further reference to excluding the winds of heaven, and the moisture with which northern skies are laden. These tramps and sederunts were the prevailing form of dissipation in Rowanden that spring, and it yielded to no other in interest and excitement, though the stir was all on one side, and with few exceptions there were no reprisals. For religion, theoretically, is in the blood of Scotch men and women, however they may sin against it practically, and some form of theology—more or less rigid and one-sided according to the ignorance or knowledge and the temperaments of the persons who hold it, and the disputes to which it gives rise, is the breath of the nation's nostrils.

These speakers who were setting the country aflame might not be more learned than Dr Menzies or better known for their simple devoutness, they might not be more fully equipped for their business or with more of the root of the matter in them than was

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true of the young student Neil, but they were men conspicuously in the world's eye, justly distinguished for being foremost in the fight, with the fame of their talents and their zeal carried far and near, by their power and popularity as city preachers, by the prominence of their utterances in newspapers and pamphlets. It was something to have seen and heard such renowned disputants. The little man with such height of shoulder and depth of chest, as to give him the appearance of deformity, whose dark pallor had something of the sinister look which often accompanies deformity, was the logician cold, clear and keen, sticking to his point like grim death, staunch as a sleuth-hound, inveterate as the same dog with his teeth in his enemy, always in danger of being detested by his opponents. By name and by local habitation he was Dr Candlish—the Rev. Robert Candlish of St George's, Edinburgh. The tall, spare man with the handsome mobile face, whose periods were those of an orator, whose rush of graphic illustrations had a dash of the first elements of poetry, who, in the middle of his passionate partisanship was so unconquerably, broadly human and genial, with ripples of fun playing now and again over his earnestness, that his adversaries were in peril of having their hearts stolen—as in later days they yielded them without a struggle to the champion, not of a party however gallant and devoted, but of a crowd of helpless, unhappy children, was Dr Guthrie, the Rev. Thomas Guthrie of Old Greyfriars and St John's, the "Lang Tam" of the Cowgate and the High Street.

Though the Commodore had two hostages which

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had been given to the Church in the persons of his twin brother and his son, he failed after attending the first to lend the countenance of his presence to any more of those Church meetings. He said little, but his attitude was an unmistakable indication that he, a gentleman and an officer, who had spent his best years and shed his blood in the service of the King and the State, in whose reckoning obedience to the ruling power was a cardinal duty, and strict discipline the sole preservation against anarchy and hideous disorder, the defiance of law, the setting up a separate camp which renounced the rule of the King's Government was rank sedition—the highway to gross insubordination and miserable confusion and degradation on all sides. Neil, no doubt, was right (as Neil could seldom be wrong) in seeing and hearing for himself all that was said and done in this ill-judged, rebellious movement, and Neil's uncle, the Commodore's brother, was old enough to judge for himself. But the Commodore looked darkly and with condemning eyes on the Doctor's reception of these ministerial visitors to the parish—the hearty hospitality he extended to them, the praise he lavished on the expression of their opinions, with not a deprecatory word, unless it came faint and late in the day, against their self-assertion and assumption of supreme solitary authority in their spiritual domain, for which they were only answerable to their spiritual Head. Yes, this spiritual kingdom was all very well, but was it purely spiritual when it came to tithes, glebes and manses which those who filled the pulpits must hold at the hands of the State, and might not the State through its representatives, the

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landed patrons, have a reasonable voice in the appointment of the reverend gentlemen who were not only Christ's ministers, but in a sense the State's tacksmen?

But the Doctor had long ago committed himself against Patronage, and his frank, straightforward, impulsive nature prompted him to cast in his lot with the protesters, to run all their risks and accept their option. And this was while he did not regard the danger to the Church's purity and integrity as so extreme, with the highest good of its adherents so desperately imperilled, according to the convictions to which so many of the leaders of his party had worked themselves up.

Neither did the Doctor care to hear the slurs and reproaches cast liberally on the Moderates, knowing as he did how many honest and steadfast Christians abode among them. Why, his brother Alan, than whom a more perfect gentleman, a braver, more humble-minded, single-hearted Christian did not exist, had hoisted their colours. And the Doctor, when he jested with Neil Menzies on his being about to prove the Erasmus to the Luthers and Melancthons of the New Reformation, strongly suspected that the views of the modest, blameless young scholar, whose heart was in his ministry, tended in the same direction. He would wait further developments. He did not see that the doctrines, discipline or rites of the Church of Scotland had been attacked, or the freedom of speech in the case of its ministers restricted, and till that happened ought not its members to pause and weigh the matter? He did not approve of Patronage, of course, but he thought a compromise might be

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effected. As to the sole undisputed jurisdiction over the Church's affairs which the Non-intrusionists claimed, Neil was not clear. He had always loved the lay element in his Church. He called himself minister or pastor, not priest. He did not pretend that either he or his fellow-ministers represented St Peter—to whom the mystical keys were given—or even the descendants of St Peter. And when it came to that, the conduct of those who considered themselves, and whom their followers considered, the vicegerents of Christ had by no means been such in the past as to warrant the assumption in the future. He did not over-estimate the State, neither did he underestimate the Church spiritual and invisible, but the Church on earth, under whatever name or form, made up as it was of fallible mortal men, he was not disposed to trust implicitly, or defer to unconditionally. He could only regard it like any other court of men, who, however sincere and conscientious—ay, in their very godliness—were liable to err.

Dr Menzies had taken as much pride in his nephew's scholarliness and in his choice of the Church as his profession as he had taken comfort in his own well-doing boys, who had not given promise of scholarship, and were not studying for the Church. Yet he was not greatly vexed with Neil or disappointed in him because he was veering to the opposite side in the conflict. After all it was not vital—not to him any more than to Neil. Dr Menzies did not trouble himself much about his nephew's position and opinions; he left that to Mary, who, dear, devoted soul, could not see or do things by halves.

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The Doctor could depend upon Neil's views being carried out in an honourable and worthy spirit. And probably their holder had a long enough life before him to wait for developments, and if he found that he had been mistaken at an earlier epoch, to amend his error. Dr Menzies did not doubt that Neil had both the courage and the honesty to own himself in the wrong when his conscience and judgment told him so. But the older man was troubled about his brother Alan. Alan's mind was not open and flexible as his son's was. When he accepted a proposition it was hard for him to let it go. And the twin brothers, though their careers in life had been far apart, had never really differed till now. The broad distinction between their experiences had rather helped to preserve intact, to a wonderful extent, both in time and in degree, their attachment and allegiance to each other. And it was no use, the Doctor reflected sorrowfully, to try to soften the Commodore's prejudices and break down his conclusions. Every argument would leave the silent, stiff-natured man whose mind was made up, to whom discussion of a subject was always difficult, and in a sense repugnant, the same or worse than it had found them.

The Doctor had no need to fear defaulters or hesitators in his own household. Mrs Menzies was not only of the stuff of which martyrs are made, she belonged to the type of which the finer fanatics are compounded. She threw herself heart and soul into the Non-intrusion agitation. She agreed with every word of its promulgators, and would have become a promulgator herself had her sex and her domestic duties not stood in the way. She positively relished

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the additional fatigue, the increased planning, pinching and doing without, to balance the enlarged expenditure produced by the invasion. She gloried in spite of all she had suffered in the prospect of the further sacrifices and hardships which were too likely to be entailed, if the Government did not yield to the indignant importunity and proud defiance—under all the respectful forms in which it was couched, of the petitioners. She was more than ready to resign that reprieve, that well-earned rest and refreshment from toil and care which she and her Doctor had anticipated, as the portion for their declining years, with their children grown up and no longer a blessed burden, a still more blessed help to the old folk. If the Lord required the relinquishment of that rest and refreshment, it was His to take as it would have been His to give, and His servants could still praise Him. And if the pittance on which they had managed to live were also required from them, it, too, was His, not theirs. And could not He who fed the ravens and clothed the lilies provide for His servants likewise?

If Marjorie was carried away in a different style from her mother, it was simply because she could not see so far before her. It was not exalted endurance in the future she made up her mind to, it was lively appreciation of the present which largely filled her horizon, as it fills the horizon of most young people. She keenly enjoyed the intellectual side of the discussions, and she was glad the dear old Kirk had spirit to rise up and assert its rights, without calmly deliberating how far its rights were set at nought and trampled upon. Who was she that she should stand up and doubt the wisdom and unction of these

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leaders in the Church who were her father's friends and comrades? She resented Neil's neutral, deliberating tone. Neil was too philosophic, too bookish, if it quenched the fire natural at his age, as learning had not subdued the generous ardour of a man of her father's years. It was another thing with her Uncle Alan, he was not to be judged by the same standard. He belonged to an older generation. He had served his King and country till obedience to authority was his watchword. Any tampering with the law as it stood, any proposal to resist it was grievous disloyalty. Marjorie was very sorry that the Commodore was not with them at the crisis, but she could understand and make allowance. She was able to see that it was next to impossible that it could be otherwise, so that in their one-sided talks, when she told him all her news, the subject with which the parish, the county and the country were ringing, was never mentioned between them. No doubt her Uncle Alan apprehended as fully as she did that the law of God was far above and beyond the law of kings and cabinets, and apprehending it if it seemed to him applicable in this case, would be the first man to give in his adherence to the Sovereign Ruler of heaven and earth. But no one—not Dr Candlish nor Dr Guthrie, and certainly not her father—had proclaimed that there was a law of God, a divine commandment forbidding men and women to continue in the Church of their fathers, in the condition in which it now was, calling on them with a call that could not be misunderstood, to save their souls by withdrawing from a communion which had fallen from its high estate and was polluted and debased. Nobody went so far

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as that, and she hoped Uncle Alan would forgive them, make allowances for them as they made allowance for him, and that somehow the jarring sense of discord would pass away.

At the schoolhouse there was at first an utter lack of sympathy with the assailants. True, the Master went like everybody else to hear the rousing addresses. Mrs Pryde did not care to walk so far by day, not to say in the evening, to be sometimes detained till nigh midnight. She had once fallen fast asleep and made a spectacle of herself in the candle-light, to the affront of Katie, and Katie's mother did not choose to repeat the experiment. *She* was not of the stuff of which martyrs and fanatics are made, while she was punctual in her attendance at church, joined with outward reverence in the prayers, sang the psalms and paraphrases in a high, piercing soprano which rang in the ears of her neighbours and tortured her daughter, and listened sufficiently to the sermon to pass on it a congerie of small, captious criticisms. But the Master was never absent from the meetings, having what was to him the rare treat of sitting checking off the arguments, and relentlessly analysing the logic, undeterred by any religious scruple of its being the Lord's Day, and it was his spirit rather than his intellect which was appealed to, such as he would have felt on listening to a Sunday sermon. His presence was not intermittent like that of Jeames, who, though he had itching ears for the subject like his fellow-parishioners, was every other night detained at the schoolhouse by the conviction that the methodical discharge of his duty to scholars compelled him to stay behind, correcting exercises, setting copies, preparing for any difficulties

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in the comprehension of the learners, not in the capacity of the teachers, in the next day's lessons.

But listening was not agreeing, and Adam Pryde made no disguise of his belief that the ministers, in detailing their grievances and proposing to take a decisive step for their remedy, were making mountains out of mole-hills, and in their partly unconscious struggle for power, threatening to break their own necks. Though on a totally different plane from the Commodore — though it was naked and unabashed common sense and not the chivalry of old service which influenced him, the Master, too, had a high respect for the powers that be, and a rooted determination to submit to their authority, unless, indeed, a flagrant offence was committed against his conscience. He had a shrewd guess how his friend Archie would end by deciding; but if Archie Menzies was, in spite of his gifts, an unworldly, sentimental fool, he, Adam Pryde, was nothing of the kind. And he was not Archie's schoolmaster, though he was under his jurisdiction, or, it had better be called his suzerainty, he was the schoolmaster of Rowanden parish school, which, no less than the Church, existed as by law established, and if it in any sense wantonly disobeyed or defied the law, so it justly forfeited its endowment. And without its endowment, how could it be carried on—how could it last? He held his parish clerkship on the same tenure. His eldership—a voluntary acceptance of an unpaid office—came under another head; but even as an elder he had undertaken the duties and discharged them to a State Church.

At the beginning of the crusade Katie had taken

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little interest in the question, and her curiosity would hardly have been active enough to carry her abroad under trying conditions had it not been for the bearing which the contest had on Neil Menzies' prospects, and for the fact that she could count on encountering him at each gathering of the people. Her fancy for Neil was still sufficiently strong in the absence of other attractions; to take her into his company in circumstances where not the strictest sense of maidenly modesty could see itself aggrieved, or be impelled to hold her back. It was much the same blending of curiosity and fostered wish to come in contact with Marjorie of the Manse which brought Benjie Peebles to the Church meetings. But Benjie was not perverse, whatever repressed bitterness he might have to struggle against, he could not be accused of womanly waywardness, and it was sheer perversity and waywardness—over which, perhaps, she had no great control—which caused Katie, after she had been fully apprised of her father's views, and tolerably enlightened with regard to Neil Menzies' likings, all at once to be interested, impressed and converted to Non-intrusion principles. Her father only laughed and said she would soon change her tale. Her mother was utterly bewildered. If anyone else who has been introduced at this distance of time to Katie Pryde imagines that it would have been more natural for her to stick tenaciously to the other side—to seek, as taking advantage of an excellent opportunity, to recommend herself to her old school-fellow, Neil, by her warmly-expressed sympathy with the Moderate party in the Church, in contradistinction to his

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cousin, Marjorie of the Manse's enthusiasm for the belligerent faction — that imagination proves that they little knew the real Katie, or the frowardness of the human, especially of the female mind. Such behaviour would have been the tactics of a commonplace, vulgar-minded, cunning *intriguante*, whether actuated by passion or by worldly-mindedness, and the true Katie was something quite different. Why, she actually hugged herself on raising a barrier between herself and Neil—a similar barrier to that which would henceforth exist between him and his cousin—in doing so she greatly exaggerated her own girlish regard for him, and what might have become his regard for her, until she was able to pose to her own satisfaction as a victim to high principle. Neither was she altogether deluding herself, far less deliberately throwing dust into her own eyes with reference to her convictions in the controversy which in the beginning had possessed so little meaning and weight for her. When she was at last moved to listen and inquire, the discontent with the world as it was, the fellow-feeling for all malcontents, the hot assertion of free-will in the middle of her languor which she had always entertained, were each enlisted in the cause, while her over-stimulated, emotional nature received for the first time a religious bias.

CHAPTER V

NEIL'S PRESENTATION

"THE boy has got a presentation to Midtryst—a charge in every way desirable, in a pleasant corner of the Lothians," cried the Doctor, coming into his wife's drawing-room, where she and Marjorie were the last remnant of the family group which had been gathered round the frugal but prettily set Manse tea-table. He proclaimed his news, waving a letter which he held in his hand with as unbounded exultation, as if his announcement had been that he himself—for the benefit of his family—had been left a fortune large enough to cast the bequest which had recently come to his brother completely into the shade.

Mrs Menzies was too well-bred a woman to be guilty of a restive snort, but she was obliged to clear her throat with what was suspiciously like a quick, 'polite attempt to mask the more objectionable protest.

"To think of Neil with a parish, a church, and a manse of his own!" burst out Marjorie. "What will he do with them?" She stopped abruptly, with a little prick of pain—something had come between her and her old friend and cousin in these latter days. There was no longer the same full

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comprehension and entire trust which had once existed where they were concerned, even when, as she believed, she had been a self-righteous, self-satisfied young prig, who had bullied poor Neil, and ruled over him as she had no right to do—above all when he was her senior. Why, it was only the other day (it was two years, during which the storm which was looming over them had been heard only in insulated Rowanden in intermittent mutterings) that she had been proud and agitated, as if it had been she who was going to officiate, in hearing him preach his first sermon. She had drawn a long breath of nervous relief and glad admiration long before he had finished. She had been so sure that the rest of his hearers would agree with her, that she had not been content with her father's cordial praise, she had, of her own accord, secretly sent out Bell to stroll along the washing-green which marched with the public road, and was only divided from it by a beech hedge, to hear the favourable remarks of the dispersing congregation, and convey them to her Uncle Alan. There would be keen criticism, too, since the speakers were Scotch men and women; but that also would be acceptable after the hearty approbation, and would be interesting and diverting to those who had most to do with it—not that she believed Neil would ever listen to the report. He would say that an unfair advantage had been taken of the people; and what would she have done if they had abused his sermon and him? As if there could have been any opinion save one! As if it would have been possible to find fault with anything so fine—so well thought out, earnest and reverent!

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It had struck her also that his Geneva gown and white tie became him, made him look manly and dignified—so that only the bands of a “placed” minister was wanted to make his fitting costume complete. It was long ago, almost as far back as when they were boy and girl together, and he had first turned his thoughts to being a life-long student and to entering the ministry like his Uncle Archie, that she had firmly promised to stitch his first pair of bands.

“And there must not be a wrong stitch in them,” he had insisted, and she had put him down, telling him he would be well off if she did her best and gave him such a present. And now it seemed, if she did not set about her task forthwith, she would not be able to keep her promise.

In covertly inspecting his personal appearance it had amused her to observe that the strand of soft, silky brown hair which had so mortified him in his boyhood still teased him by falling out of its orderly place and intruding on one eyebrow. Then she had called herself back for frivolity, and had settled herself to listen seriously, and to profit by Neil’s knowledge and earnestness.

And here was she wondering what he would do with a parish, church and manse! Well, she might have expressed the same wonder in the old days, but it would have been in a different spirit—without a doubt of his competency and his determination to serve his Master and his flock. It was singular how the idea taken from the Master’s simile of sheep in a fold, as representative of the worshippers in their kirks, had clung to the old builders and furnishers

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of the kirks, so that they had named the seats "buchs," synonymous in Scotch for sheep-folds, and used in that sense when applied elsewhere. And the time had come when the sheep claimed the right to choose their shepherd, while it seemed that Neil Menzies hesitated in acknowledging, if he did not absolutely deny, the right. She would never have thought it of him. And now she felt, with a spasm of regret which was not without a tinge of remorse, that it was sapping her faith in him. It suggested that he was too philosophic, that he might give himself up to his books, get buried in them—he had been a student from his boyhood. He might grow more and more indifferent to the people's opinion, become careless of writing sermons adapted to their wants, or even of making himself acquainted with their needs, go on to neglect visiting them and lapse into an accomplished gentleman, more or less a man of the world, separated by a great gulf from the men and women given to him to direct heavenwards.

Not so did Dr Menzies judge. He answered her question in the generous confidence of the past, without so much as suspecting that she had lost a grain of that confidence—nay, he put into her mouth a sentiment she had not expressed.

"Yes, he will do wonders; I agree with you, Margie, your cousin Neil is no ordinary lad. His parts are beyond the common to begin with, and his prolonged study time, which every student cannot command, finished up in Germany, has brought them near to perfection."

"I have my doubts of German theology," Mrs

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Menzies spoke for the first time. "I understand it tends to materialism, if not to downright scepticism."

The Doctor stared, taken aback at being thus brought up in his eulogy.

"You did not think that of Dutch theology, Mary, when both you and I were so proud when I secured three months at Leyden. It is not knowledge—which when pure and simple can but be a search after truth that leads to infidelity. It is the fallibility of the poor seekers, men, who have no sense of proportion, and will take miserable petty difficulties that are the next thing to inevitable, and after all are of no account whatever, and make them weigh down the balance against truths that are as sublime as they are divine, which concern the whole world. Neil is not of that sort. He is as good as gold—that young chap of Alan's—as reverent as when he did not know a word save what belonged to his mother tongue. There is something too big, too great in him for him to be enamoured of doubt and disbelief. He is fair and honest. But it would break his heart to lose his faith, and that being so, he will hold it triumphant to the end."

Marjorie of the Manse looked and listened, staggered and thrilled, but troubled by that familiarity with the object of her father's eulogy, which, if it does not breed contempt, refuses to suffer the said object to rise above the old level at which it has stood in the critic's estimation, most probably the critic's own level. Good; yes, he had always been good in a boy and lad's way, but how could she attribute greatness to the cousin to whom she used

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to dictate, who was wont to allow his dog as well as her—Marjorie—to tyrannise over him, who had once been guilty of a subterfuge, which his father had denounced as a lie, and punished accordingly. And Neil had borne the punishment like a man, but had been so conscience-stricken because of the deception he had committed, that she had been forced to comfort him because of her fear that he would go softly and sorrowfully all his life afterwards on account of his transgression.

Mrs Menzies kept silence with a tight-shut mouth, as if she could have said something in contradiction of her husband if she had cared to do so, until he went on to say in ecstatic musing dreaming,—

“I declare that boy puts me to shame sometimes,” when she could stand it no longer.

“Nonsense, Archie!” she said quite tartly. “How can you speak of preserving just proportions when you never could keep to the medium in praising other people, and depreciating yourself? People who did not know your weakness would say it was affectation, and certainly they would have reason to complain that your swans were in danger of turning out geese.”

His only answer was a good-humoured laugh, and something about a wife's flattering preference. Then he proceeded to tell how he came by his information.

“I had it from Alan himself. We have not seen much of him lately,” and his brow clouded when he said the words, but cleared immediately when he added with evident gratification, “but he was on his way here with the news, which only came this

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morning, when I met him in the Drovers' Loaning and we took a daunder together and discussed the event—a great event to Alan since it means so much to his laddie, his one child. Though I said Neil had been privileged with a long student time, he has come fell early into his kingdom—half-a-dozen years sooner than I—you mind that my father, worthy man, had let any family influence we had ever possessed slip out of his hands. I had to wait and you had to wait what we thought was a weary time. Then, as it happened, through Alan, because one of his shipmates was the Patron here, and thus knew my name among those of the other candidates, I suppose recalled something of my father, and to save himself further trouble, made me the offer of the living. Alan has always said there was no intimacy between him and Sandilands; indeed, I do not see how there could have been, seeing the vast difference which divides the two men.”

She did not reply, and if he had been looking at her instead of into the teacup he had taken from Marjorie, and was stirring meditatively, he would have seen that she had winced at his allusion to their personal experience.

“But Neil has a steady head on young shoulders,” he went on, “and he has got his presentation in a more orthodox and creditable fashion. When he was preaching on one Sunday three months ago for the minister of St Cuthbert's, Edinburgh, it chanced that Colonel Bouverie, the patron of Mid-tryst, was one of the congregation, without Neil's being aware of it. He acquitted himself so well,

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and the Colonel was so pleased that when the parish of Midtryst fell vacant ten days ago, he wrote to Neil's address, which he had sought out, and made him the presentation in the handsomest manner—most gratifying to him, not to say to his father. Here is the letter," and he substituted it for his cup, which he put on the mantelpiece, where he had laid the letter he had brought in exultingly a short time before.

"I can guess the contents," broke in Mrs Menzies hastily, by the very dryness of her tone accomplishing the paradox of damping her husband's enthusiasm—to Marjorie's disappointment. For she had not fallen out with her cousin to the extent of being what she would have called so mean as to decline to hear the compliments paid to him.

Mrs Menzies proceeded to give an example of the better sort of Patron's manner of bestowing a presentation. "On such a day had the pleasure of hearing you deliver an excellent discourse in St Cuthbert's Church, Edinburgh," "Have not forgotten the occasion, I assure you," "Happy to have it in my power," and the rest of it. It would please me more to hear that your nephew had got a call from the congregation."

"All in good time, they have not heard him yet. Colonel Bouverie desires that they may have the opportunity as soon as possible, and I believe *our* nephew is going to Midtryst in the end of the week. Possibly his father will accompany him. In the meantime here is the presentation."

"I hope the days of such ugly processes as Patrons and Presentations are numbered," said Mrs

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Menzies, passionately. "This may be one of the last of them. If I were Neil I should not be in a hurry to accept. I should say I must wait till the Assembly met, and see what came of it."

"Out of the question, my dear; the present system, however much you dislike it, has been in force for generations, and is, up to this day, the law of the Church—no less than of the land." Genial and indulgent as he was, he was slightly nettled by her reception of the piece of good fortune which had come to his favourite, Neil, and her persistence in disparaging it, and in a sense him also. The Doctor and the Commodore had been happy in forgetting their difference of opinion, and in rejoicing over the deserved successes of a member of the family not two hours before. The best of men may be provoked to retaliation. "Call canny, mem," the Doctor went on to adjure his wife with a twinkle half of annoyance, half of mischief in his full, mild eyes. "Before you at once abolish Patronage root and branch—which I can tell you Thomas Chalmers approves under certain conditions—you must be prepared to provide a substitute."

"So I am. So we are, Archie, as you well know," she cried eagerly, "the voice of the people."

"Which is not always the voice of God," he interpolated calmly; "witness their choice of Barabbas. Popular elections are not without their drawbacks and dangers. And there are those who hold that for the taught to select their teachers is an anomaly, an absurdity, and a terrible blunder on the face of it."

"You are too trying, sir," she cried indignantly,

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"you do not hold with those opponents—why should you speak as if you did, before Marjorie, too. What is the girl to think?"

"Mother, don't vex yourself for nothing," Marjorie defended her own intelligence. "As if I did not know what father thought!"

"He is as convinced as I am"—Mrs Menzies was piqued into making assurance doubly sure by turning to her daughter—"that the people, however ignorant and stupid—and our people who, in the persons of their fathers, of themselves and of their children—have attended John Knox's parish schools for centuries, are neither ignorant nor stupid—if they but be honest and God-fearing, are far fitter to choose their ministers than such Patrons as Sandilands, whom one would fain not mention in decent company, or than many another. If not English outright, they are English bred. They have been led by the teaching of English schools and colleges, and by English wives to forsake the faith of their fathers, as if they thought King James was right, and Presbyterianism was not the religion for a gentleman. The bulk of our nobility and gentry have gone that way, and what the old Lords of Convention who signed the Covenant in the Greyfriars Kirkyard would have said to their degenerate, anglicised descendants it is hard to tell. At least you will allow that these, our Episcopalian Patrons, have disqualified themselves from having either knowledge of, or sympathy with, the needs and the feelings of the people."

"I admit it," granted the Doctor, throwing his objections to the winds, and coming out in his true

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colours, as he owned the defeat of his alleged scruples heartily, and with the best grace in the world. "Woman, you cannot go further than I in that line."

"And if Neil Menzies does not go as far, he is no nephew of mine," said the lady with her still fine head held high, and her lips firmly pressed together.

"Come, come, let the poor laddie alone," remonstrated his uncle, half jestingly. "To think that Neil, who never offended you or me in his life before, should be a bone of contention! Can you not speak a word for your cousin and old playfellow, Marjorie?"

"I've nothing to say against Neil," said Marjorie, speaking a very dubious word. "Only I'm grieved that he is not on our side."

"There, there," sighed the Doctor, "so you, too, have yet to learn the full meaning of there being two sides to a question. That is a lesson a woman—even a fine woman like you, Mary, not to say a baggage wise in her own conceit like Marjorie yonder (I beg your pardon, my lassie, it is the fault of your sex and age)—finds a great difficulty in learning. But we'll give Neil the benefit of the doubt, the length of his tether, and I'll come bound for him that he'll be all right in the end. And now, would you not like to hear all the ins and outs of this parish of his that his father is so full of?"

After the Doctor's pledge for Neil's ultimate credit, the audience could not well refuse to listen to the particulars which the optimist in his warm goodwill to his brother and his nephew was dying to impart. The income to be derived from the living

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was three hundred and fifty pounds a year, exclusive of the glebe and the manse, which was well built and commodious.

"From what I hear, not inferior to this house," commented the Doctor, extending the arm of an approving proprietor in the direction of the more distant windows. "It has an excellent garden, and is most pleasantly situated in the crook of a burn, and the neuk of a brae—the Tryst Brae. The population is mostly agricultural, but not entirely so, as in the case of Rowanden—there is a considerable remnant of hand-loom weavers who still do work for some of the manufacturers in the manufacturing town, at about a dozen miles' distance. They are a most intelligent set these weavers, if they are apt to be a trifle fractious. And the farmers are not like our douce working pauchlers. The farms are large, and are held by men of capital, some of whom have been to college, and are more on a par with the lairds, of whom there is a pretty sprinkling, most of them attenders at the parish church, and some of the older men and women on its communion roll. Colonel Bouverie and his family are not members, naturally, since they hail from beyond the Borders. But as the next town with an English chapel is a good way off, and they like to hear a good sermon (there is a dig for you at the English clergyman, and from one of his own fold, too!), he makes a point of their going frequently to the parish church. Neil will be in no want of society and helpers in his work. It is a most desirable settlement—well nigh to a wish. No wonder Neil is pleased, and his father fairly uplifted. The old

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incumbent, recently dead, was a good man, I believe, and highly respected, but he was up in years and a bachelor, and he let the place get somewhat out of repair. I can see Alan is on the *qui vive* to put it all right. He will furnish the house properly at once."

"Then will Uncle Alan leave Rowanden and go with Neil?" asked Marjorie between excitement and disconsolateness. For the thought of the Commodore's Lodgings standing empty, no longer waiting for her to wake up Mrs Ord, and to aid and abet Neil in all sorts of young people's improvements and innovations on the old order of the house, to compass the greater comfort and cheer of its master, was rather a doleful prospect. It would be to lose two friends, and to cut off at a blow one of her earliest, most cherished outside occupations. She had enough to do in all conscience, but to take care of Uncle Alan had been a self-imposed duty which was an agreeable relief and change, and had always been, as she was willing to acknowledge, a sweet sop to her vanity and sense of self-importance.

"No, I think not," her father reassured her. "He says it might hamper Neil—that young people are better left—to begin with especially, to make their own surroundings. Besides, what would become of Mrs Ord? A next to bedridden woman would be a daft-like housekeeper for a young minister who will soon have marriage in his head, no doubt, though, for aught I can tell, the fellow is fancy free as yet. A wife will be the fit housekeeper for him."

PART III .
THE STORM BURSTS

CHAPTER I

THE RUPTURE

"I MUST go and see that Simmie is not out bare-headed in this rime—I heard him coughing last night," was Marjorie's abrupt declaration. "Besides, he has his sums to do and his geography to learn before bedtime." As she left the room she heard her mother say, still with a reserve of coolness in her voice,—

"Well, I hope Neil will be acceptable to the people, and will turn out the faithful pastor you count on his being," and her father answer,—

"No question of that. He has parts and he has grace; what would they have more? They are very well off to get him. And anybody who says a word against it is nothing else than a cantankerous idiot."

It had not been pleasant for Marjorie to hear her old ally and boy squire picked to pieces and disposed of to the extreme point of being furnished with a wife, though she had remained nameless, a visionary creation of the brain. She had not minded so much when it was only the parish and manse to which he had been presented that was discussed; on the contrary, she had liked to hear about his new home, and her imagination had quickly pictured it—quite spacious and capable of being altogether nice, as her

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own home was, even although it was threadbare. She saw it in "the crook of a burn" and "the neuk of a brae," sheltered and sunny, in these respects the reverse of Rowanden, which needed its trees and shrubberies to prevent its being just a trifle exposed, with a touch of moorland bleakness in early spring. She daresayed the gowans would be white and thick in the Midtryst Manse fields by now, though they had hardly put in an appearance at Rowanden; and what flowers and fruit Neil might have in his garden!—he who had always been fond of their cultivation, though she had called him a bungler as an amateur gardener, just as he was a bungler as an amateur domestic carpenter and upholsterer. On the other hand, Katie Pryde had told her that Benjie—that is, Dr Peebles—had mended Mrs Pryde's easy-chair till it was as good as new, and had put a fresh screw into Katie's music stool; more than that, when the new servant did not come home on the term night, and Mrs Pryde was ill in bed, he went down to the kitchen and screened Katie's incapacity by stewing a rabbit and making a pudding for supper, as well as if he had been a trained cook. But, to be sure, when one came to think of it, if his trade was to mend bones, he might not find mending the leg of a chair a very difficult matter, and, seeing the messes of physic he had to concoct, a pudding was probably child's play to him. Then Marjorie's mind strayed while she turned the skirt of her Menzies tartan frock over her head to shelter herself from the rime and looked out from beneath the screen—blooming young woman though she was—a little as a roguish child plays bo-peep; she searched in the toolhouse

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and the summer-house, the pigeon-house and Simmie's own rabbit hutch for the delinquent, to save him from mustard plasters and doctor's prescriptions, and all the time her mind ran on and away to what might have been if her father's announcement had been made before the Church troubles had brought about sore heart-searchings, the dividing of chief friends, and the dark shadow of coming sacrifices well-nigh as bitter as death itself. Then the good news of Neil's promotion would have had no alloy. They at the Manse would have rejoiced with the fortunate young man who deserved his good fortune, and with his father—their near kinsfolk—without doubt or fear. And as time went on, and the solemn festival of his "ordination" and "induction"—the great event and turning-point in a young minister's life—came to pass, the Commodore, who would be certain to be present, would probably have invited his brother, the Doctor, and his sister-in-law to accompany him, very likely also Marjorie herself, as she had been so much about his Lodgings, and she and Neil had been such boy and girl friends. The whole Manse family could not have hoped to go, and Nelly would have been well enough pleased to hear the account of the proceedings from Marjorie and her father and mother, while Nelly herself would have kept house for Duncan and Simmie. She would have been able to do it with Bell at her back, and perhaps she might have had the treat of her great friend, Lillias Spens, over from the manse of the Knock to bear her company. And what a grand jaunt it would have been for the seniors of the family circle, with whom Marjorie of the Manse was classing

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herself. The grandest she had ever known—far beyond that week in Edinburgh to visit her Aunt Forsyth and the boys, and to see the sights of the capital. For there would have been Edinburgh and its attractions again in the by-going, and there would have been the coach journey beyond Edinburgh, and, maybe, as it was so great an occasion—a wedding could not come up to it—Uncle Alan would have hired a post-chaise and driven straight through. And there would have been Midtryst, Neil's parish, where he was to labour for his Master, and in all likelihood spend the rest of his days till he was a grey-headed, stiff old man, and would say to some young minister—it might be his son, even to his grandson—in the words of the famous ballad he and she had been wont to repeat :—

“ My wound is deep, I fain would sleep,
Tak' thou the vanguard of the three.”

But it was long, long from that yet. And there was the Manse—the bonnie Manse of Midtryst “in the crook of a burn” and “the neuk of a brae,” and the rooms Uncle Alan had furnished—ah! how funny it would have been to go over them and know those were Neil's chairs and tables, and how sure her mother and she would have been to say between themselves that it was all very solid and handsome, but a lady's eye and a lady's taste had been lacking. There would have been company coming and going, for the parishioners would have wanted to see and to show attention to their minister's friends, and they on their part must have done their best to be a credit to Neil. Her father and mother could have done

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that without trying. But the great day, the great scene, would have been when the members of Neil's presbytery and his parishioners had crowded the church (she hoped Neil's church would have the venerable beauty which the old guilds of masons impressed upon their buildings, as on their own here at Rowanden) And after praise and prayer and preaching there would have been Neil standing up alone to answer certain solemn questions, and to take certain solemn vows. Then there would have been the one bowed figure in the group of ministers, and she would hardly have been able to look on calmly as each of his fathers and brethren in the presbytery laid his hand in turn in consecration and blessing on the youthful head with the scholar's brow and the woman's silken hair she knew so well. But she would have been quite able to go out with the rest of the congregation by the door where Neil stood, pale with the strain, but smiling, in order to shake each of his parishioners—rich and poor, man, woman and child—with the right hand of fellowship. She must not on any account have laughed when her turn came, even though Neil had not been so absorbed, or so far removed from her, as to have failed to give her fingers a mischievous cousinly squeeze.

But how foolish she was to think of how it would all have happened, when everything had become clouded and doubtful, when Neil might not get his parish in spite of what had come and gone, of this civil Colonel Bouverie and his voluntary gift. To think that such as he—an Englishman, an Episcopalian, who had doubtless married the gift along with the heiress

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of the estate to which it belonged—should have such power in his possession! Or Neil might think better of the great dispute, and at the last moment refuse what Patronage would give him, without the parishioners of Midtryst—who had souls to be saved or lost, and were to profit or suffer by his suitability for their needs—being so much as asked “by your leave” unless as an idle form. Oh! better a thousand times that Neil should relinquish the fatal gift, whatever it advantages, than that he should become the centre of miserable strife and unseemly warfare like those unhappy ministers and men, Mr Young of Auchterarder and Mr Edwards of Marnoch, who were by-words of scorn and indignation to all who differed from them, and to not a few who were neutral. For, by their determination to assert what they conceived to be their rights, they had driven the Court of Session and the Government to commit those acts of aggression—as all Non-intrusionists regarded them—in forcing the rejected candidates on the parishes which had repudiated them, until the quarrel between Church and State was rendered irreconcilable.

The time was more surcharged with heat and excitement than ever, the end was approaching. The summons to a convocation of Non-intrusionists alone to meet in Edinburgh and decide what course was to be taken if the Government continued to deny their claims, was obeyed by four hundred ministers from all parts of Scotland. And, after brief deliberation, they recorded their unchangeable resolution in the circumstances the leaders had anticipated, to leave a Church which had been coerced and

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was rendered unfaithful and dishonoured, and thus dissolve the union between Church and State.

Neil Menzies had been with his father to Midtryst, had preached to his future people to their general satisfaction and had received his call from them. Father and son on their return to the Commodore's Lodgings had gone to the Manse of Rowanden with their favourable report—the Commodore especially being full of unspoken but evident pride and pleasure in his son's success.

"Was the call unanimous?" asked Mrs Menzies sharply, looking up from the sewing which, unless at meal times, was never out of her hands.

"No, I am sorry to say it was not," answered the young man frankly and calmly, but not without a combined flash and twinkle in his thoughtful eyes. He was not a milksop who could not stand up for his opinions. At the same time he had a lively sense of the disproportioned horror which his reply would arouse in Mrs Menzies and Marjorie—he could trust to the Doctor being reasonable, but women would run away with a principle.

"And do you mean to say you are still to accept in the teeth of the objectors?" demanded the lady still more stringently.

"I do," he said. "You see, it is this way, Aunt Archie, the objectors are a very small party, and I question if more than two or three are Church members. They belong to the lower working class, and in Midtryst, as in many other places, there is rather a standing feud, I am sorry to say, between the more restless and discontented of them and their employers and social betters. I need not tell you it

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will be my business to do my best to allay this irritation. But in the meantime, unhappily for me, I was only too well received by the lairds and farmers, which put up the backs of the handful of labourers and Chartist weavers to style me immediately a drawing-room pet, incapable of being a man and doing a man's work, incapable of sympathising with and caring for fellow-workers, though of a different grade and in a different line. Unfortunately the divided and distracted state of the Church and the proposal to restore to the people rights which they have long ceased to exercise, has stirred up the social jealousy, turned it into this direction, and brought it into play in congregational calls, as in other popular elections of which it is the bane. It is the old unanswerable riddle of how the divisions and prejudices of the classes are to be kept under control for the common good of all."

"No systems are perfect, Neil, my man," represented the Doctor a little uneasily. "All we can do is to select what we believe to be the fairest, and the most in accordance with our conscience and the Scriptures, which are our rule of life. Then I don't question we'll get the guidance and the blessing promised to those who do their best—whatever course seems best to them."

"And you must confess, Neil, the poor have their rights as well as the rich." Marjorie could not be silent any longer, he and she had been friendly antagonists in so many arguments, and she did not see that his being a man and a minister with a parish hanging in the balance, made an insurmountable alteration in their relations. She could not bear to

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hear him bring forward reasons which, in the over-stimulated, passionate view she had been led to take of the wrongs the Church had received in the struggle, sounded specious, cold, faithless and worldly. She could not have believed it, but for her ears which heard his words, and she felt as if they must be deceiving her. "Not only the poor, the ignorant and simple. If they know anything they know what they want, what they understand, what will do them good," she insisted.

"I'm not so sure of that, Marjorie," he told her plainly—she thought too lightly—could it be scoffingly? "In this instance, certainly, you are making out too good a case for a handful of spiteful, contentious, curiously illiterate, unreasonable men and women, though they have been trained in John Knox's parish schools. You are judging them according to what you would do yourself. Luckily there are too few of them to go any further or to do much harm either to themselves or their neighbours. For you must remember the rich have their rights as well as the poor, the wiser and more intelligent as well as the simple and ignorant, and when they are the great majority, what would you have me and my friends do? Consent to be browbeaten and driven out of the field by those who ought to be dealt with tolerantly, it is true, because they know no better, and we can trust they may be won over by patience and kindness. But to yield to them, to give them their own unjustifiable, ungovernable way would thwart and vex us, of course, but it would be their destruction."

Mrs Menzies' fingers were trembling so that she

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could hardly hold her needle. She caught blindly at the words which had stung her most.

"Illiterate!" she said in a voice which shook with emotion. "I was not aware that a college degree of necessity made for righteousness, or was a passport to salvation. I hope the great majority you speak of, sir, is something more than the single signature to the man of Marnoch's call, and that, I believe, was made by a low fellow who kept a public-house—not of the best reputation."

Neil Menzies stared at her in utter amazement. Did this wild, extravagant speech come from his Aunt Archie, his uncle, the Doctor's well-suited partner, to whom Neil had always looked up as to the personification of right reason, good sense, generous and just estimate of her fellows and of splendid devotion to duty?

Before Neil could attempt to defend himself another element on which he had not reckoned entered into the incident. The Commodore, with his cap beneath his arm, took a step forward and spoke—he who so seldom put in his word.

"Madam"—he confronted his sister-in-law with a sternness—he who was so pacific and mild in his intercourse with women!—which made his audience seem to see him on the quarterdeck overhauling the enemy he was about to demolish—"let me tell you that I regard—have long regarded—the actions of the party in the Church with which you have allied yourself, to which it has grieved me to the heart to find that my brother there has given in his adherence, is nothing short of mutiny—rank mutiny—which every loyal servant of the Queen and her Government

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must condemn. And any man who aids and abets mutinies deserves his fate—to be run up to the yardarm or shot where he stands. As for the aspersions you have cast on my son, if they had not been made—strange to say—by a lady, I would have called the speaker to account and made him unsay his words. Come, Neil, this is no place for us.”

The Commodore had delivered his mind with a vengeance, and was already half way to the door. The Doctor and Neil looked at each other with utter consternation. In the dead silence which followed, Mrs Menzies sat as if she were turned to stone. Marjorie burst out crying, stopped herself in an instant, moved closer to her mother, and looked defiance at Neil.

“I am sorry,” he stammered, and in three words of simplest acknowledgment there was sorrow indeed.

“Go, Neil, go,” said the Doctor, hastily. “We have some of us been speaking unadvisedly, losing our heads and letting our unruly tongues say more than we meant—a thousand times more. But we will think better of it, and it will all come right.” But he sighed heavily as he spoke, for he knew that the mischief which had been done in a few unguarded moments of unchecked partisan rancour, which “works like madness on the brain,” and of the galling of a father’s pride—months, years, this life itself might not undo.

CHAPTER II

THE JUDGMENT OF THE RIGHTEOUS

MRS MENZIES had found time to finish a letter to her sons while Marjorie dusted the drawing-room. The mother turned round from her desk and indulged in a confidence to her daughter.

"I went too far yesterday. I am sorfy I hurt your Uncle Alan," speaking with a candour which was an integral part of her character. "But as for Neil, well, the house is your father's house and Neil is the Commodore's son of whom your father had always too high an opinion, but for my part I had rather he did not darken these doors again."

"Mother!" Marjorie started up clutching her duster.

"Marjorie! I know what friends you and he were before he went to college, and after for that matter—his having no sister and you being so much with his father has made him like one of our own boys to you. I don't blame you, but oh! he has been a sorrow and a terrible disappointment—only to think of the Commodore's son, your father's nephew, for whom he had so great a regard, turning out a time-server and a turncoat!"

"But that is a hard thing to say," remonstrated Marjorie, full of distress. "Neil was never greedy or

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grasping as a boy, he was always ready to share his pony, the best things he had, with his companions. He never said that he would leave the Church if the Government did not comply with its request."

"He did worse. And in the first place you are young, you do not know how characters change as temptations present themselves. The child is not always father to the man. It is so easy to give the reins to avarice and ambition—the last infirmity of noble minds, it has been called. But personal ambition, like personal acquisitiveness, is not a noble thing when one sees it behind the scenes and close at hand. I should say there is no meanness, insincerity and falseness at which it will stop to gain its ends. There is not much hope for a young man to whom your father's life-long example has been of no use."

"But father would not wish to control any man's opinions and sway his conduct. He would have everybody judge for himself," pleaded Marjorie, adding piteously, "And why do you say he—Neil—did worse than pretend that he would leave the Church, and then, when it came to the test, drew back?"

"Because then he would be an open renegade and apostate whose cowardice and treachery everybody would have seen and despised. He and his set have been too cautious and specious for that—they have gone just so far with us and no further. They have split up the evangelical party and weakened it accordingly. Had all who were not mere hangers-on for the sake of the emoluments—had the M'Leods, Muirs, and the rest of them been true to their principles, to the carrying them out to the bitter end as we are going to do, no Government

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could have had the face to resist their appeal. But no, they could not withdraw their necks from the yoke, the loaves and the fishes and the worldly dignity of being ministers in a State Church weighed more heavily with them than their Master's crown rights, than the unstained purity, the unchallengeable freedom of the blue banner of the Kirk of our fathers. Neil Menzies must be a thorough Laodicean—lukewarm in everything save liberty to bury himself in his books, and leisure and sufficient affluence to permit him to be a student to the end of his life. If he get this unfortunate parish of Midtryst and is ordained and settled there—all the difference will be that he will break his ordination vows as his friends are about to do."

Marjorie said nothing. What could she say when these were the sentiments she herself had been led to entertain? She only looked a little more miserable when her mother went on to observe,—

"I am sorry to lay what I am aware will be a painful interdict upon you, my dear, but there is no help for it. So far as I am concerned I forgive your Uncle Alan from the bottom of my heart, for anything he implied of me in his extraordinary speech before he went yesterday. I provoked him and I am sorry for it, as I have told you, and would tell him if I had the opportunity, which it appears to me I am not likely to have. But that does not alter the fact that you cannot go to his Lodgings as you have been in the habit of doing until he makes the reparation which is due to your father."

"Mother! mother!" cried Marjorie in the extremity of grieved protest, "when Mrs Ord's knees

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and wrists are as bad as bad can be, and Jenny and Sailor Bill are at a standstill if they get no directions—and Jenny is to be married at Whitsuntide. Why, Uncle Alan was to have driven in with me to Kilcairnie next week to get the character of Mrs Methven's servant to replace Jenny, which will be difficult enough though Jenny is not over bright at any time, and her mind has been engrossed with her marriage preparations for the last three months. I heard Neil tell father aside that Uncle Alan has been quite out of sorts since his expedition. He has led such a clockwork life for so many years—and in addition to the fatigue he had so much excitement—pleasurable though it was," Marjorie ended, her voice sinking.

"It is a pity," said her mother inexorably, "but it is not fit that you or any of the others should listen to such language as was spoken last night. Besides, after what we have been forced to realise with regard to your cousin Neil, I do not consider that he is desirable company for you."

"But there is no chance of our hearing such language," urged Marjorie, desperately, "you know how little Uncle Alan has to say, how he reserves his impressions; and Neil—however wrong he may be—would never, never cast what would be a reflection on father and you before us."

"Just so, Marjorie," agreed her mother, composedly. "It would be a reflection on us and we will not put it in Neil's power—I do not trust him by a hair's-breadth—to do it. You all know better, but he is older with the remarkable parts your father is always quoting, and the profane learning which has been the

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lad's undoing. Error is insidious. If he unsettled any of you—Nelly, who does not pay much heed to such matters, or a boy at Duncan's questioning, reckless age, I should never forgive myself. You must let the Commodore and the son the poor man is built up in, alone, out of bare respect—I do not say for me—for your father."

That sentence clinched the matter, Marjorie knew. For, dignified woman as Mrs Menzies was, of whom her children—even her well-beloved Marjorie—stood somewhat in awe, they all knew that while it might be possible for her to overlook some presumption, some thoughtless lack of consideration towards herself, of which they were not likely to be guilty, the slightest want of deference to their father, who could not so much as conceive that they would abuse those frankest, freest terms on which he stood with his children, she would not forgive.

At this moment Mrs Menzies left the topic with which she had been dealing as a thing thrashed out and done with, and turned to a domestic interest.

"I think I see dust on these brackets and pictures yet, you had better go over them again—the sun must have got into your eyes—and then run and find Nelly, she is spending an unconscionable time feeding those chickens, and amusing herself with Duncan's bantams—she can do something better worth setting about. The carrier has brought the bitter oranges from Kilcairnie, and I want you two to begin cutting the chips (your father is partial to home-made marmalade) while I finish the socks which are to go in the boys' box, that Willie Brown is to take back in time for the coach starting." There

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was little time to spare in the Manse of Rowanden for brooding and lamenting, though there, as elsewhere, those who would lamented in the middle of the cheerful bustle, it was only moping which was out of count.

The next ordeal Marjorie had to encounter was to hear Katie Pryde mourn over Neil's defection, as if it were one of the seven deadly sins, and at the same time to dwell on it with gusto, as if there was a relish in its very iniquity which lent him a special distinction.

"Who would ever have thought it? Your cousin Neil was such a nice, well-behaved, gentlemanly boy, and when he was grown up so thoughtful and quietly in earnest, as a probationer may well be. It must be an awful responsibility to be answerable for souls in your charge! It is bad enough to have to give an account for your own wasted years—as I am finding to my cost. But that he should be a backslider! To snatch at his first chance of a parish under this horrid system of Patronage, upon which all good men in the ministry are turning their backs, and to pay no heed to the objections of a portion of those whom he would call his parishioners, because, forsooth! they are the poor of the flock. The poor to whom the promise was given that to them the Gospel would be preached. Does it not show, Marjorie, what depraved creatures we all are, and how prone to fall away from grace, unless we keep our lamps burning, and are girt round with heavenly armour day and night?"

The two young women had met on the country road which Marjorie was traversing on some

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parochial errand for her father, which Katie, who had held herself till lately exempt from such obligations, had taken to treading, to her mother's wonder and vexation, on missions of charity. The wind was still bitterly cold and Marjorie was well wrapped up in one of those double—nay, four-fold—woollen plaids which defied all the winds of Heaven, and lasted for generations. Her every-day bonnet of loosely-plaited straw was lined with riband, had knots of riband protecting her fresh cheeks, and strings of the same dark blue riband tied comfortably under her chin. Her hands were cosily ensconced in the same down muff which she had worn when she went to watch the curling matches in which her father played on the Muir Loch, and to exchange the numbers of *Barnaby Rudge* and *Charles O'Malley* with Neil and Benjie. The down of the muff was still like driven snow (it had this advantage over fur that the linen on which the down was stitched could be unpicked from the lining, washed and shaken out in the process of drying, till it was restored to its pristine purity).

Katie Pryde, on the contrary, was now dressed with almost ostentatious disregard to the weather and to her own well-being. Why should she be warm when so many, morally her betters, in all probability, were cold? She might have been doing penance in the thin cloth jacket worn to her every-day winsey frock, her last summer's bonnet with the flowers taken out so that it had a somewhat stripped and forlorn appearance, the gauze strings pinned loosely at her neck, her hands numb with cold in their kid gloves—hardly able to hold the handle of

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the basket in which she had carried some supposed dainty neither suitable nor welcome to the aged recipient.

"My cousin Neil is his own master, he must judge for himself," Marjorie had answered the jeremiad a little shortly. For it was one thing for her to blame Neil in her own mind, even to hear her mother condemning him in no measured terms, and quite another to listen to Katie Pryde bemoaning the downfall of a youthful idol—the man for whose sake she had been willing to take the trouble to learn German, in order to be able to sing the songs he loved. •

"Still, it is such a shame of the Doctor's nephew," resumed Katie. "I don't wonder, if what people say is true, that your father and mother have forbidden him the Manse, where he used to be like one of yourselves, and that neither you nor any of the rest of you are to be suffered to go to the Commodore's Lodgings."

"People generally know their neighbours' affairs better than the neighbours do themselves, and try to push them to a sadder extremity," answered Marjorie with an effort, and a degree of annoyance which she restrained with difficulty. "Of course, thinking differently, as we do, and with all the heat and turmoil around us, it may be advisable for us not to meet at present," she ended stiffly.

"But what will become of him?" urged Katie, her large, liquid, violet eyes holding Marjorie fast. "We have all heard of German rationalism, and that it often ends in practical unbelief. Can you imagine Neil an infidel? Perhaps masking his infidelity by

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hypocrisy, and preaching mechanically truths which are dead to him, in which he no longer believes, unable to put up a prayer for himself that he may be saved from grievous sin, which is always besetting the best of us. Oh! who will help him when he has denied and renounced his best Helper?"

"Katie Pryde, how dare you!" Marjorie stood still in the middle of the road, and shook off from her as it were the dust of Katie's denunciations and forebodings. "You speak as if Neil Menzies were a reprobate, a criminal. To his own Master he stands or falls, not to you or me, not even to the doctors of the Church. I think you are so wretchedly cold and tired that you don't know what you are saying."

"I don't mind the cold," said Katie, loftily. "What is a little cold more or less compared to—" her voice broke and she shuddered—"the everlasting burnings? No, don't go on quickly and leave me behind. You know that when the Non-intrusionists leave the Church to the backsliders and the Moderates, it will be a dead Church, with no more life and good works remaining in it. Like every other dead thing it will grow corrupt, and defile whoever has to do with it."

"I can't believe it," cried Marjorie, rebelliously, her natural liberal breadth of spirit reasserting itself. "Wait and see. We can at least grant them that grace—we have surely known some of them long enough and well enough to do that. Now go home at once, Katie," Marjorie, who was not her mother's daughter for nothing, insisted, "or you will get your death. You are blue with cold, and you are all 'ditherin',' as Neil says. It will do

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the Church no good for you to make an uncalled-for martyr of yourself."

"An uncalled-for martyr"—were the words prophetic? Marjorie of the Manse did not wait and see, but whatever conclusion she came to for the decision of her own fate, the conviction of many of the fierier of the Non-intrusionists was strong that the old Church of Scotland without them was moribund, and would convey the taint of its declension and decay to all who entered within its gates. For many a long year those members of a new Church they had christened "Free" would not pass within its precincts, where they had offered up their prayers and sung God's praises, where their forefathers had worshipped, as if the venerable walls would defile the sons and daughters who had forsaken their own and their fathers' sanctuary of hallowed memories.

CHAPTER III

THE RENT IN THE ASSEMBLY

AGAINST one more thrust—the more offensive because of its meanness and vulgarity—Marjorie rose up in open rebellion. The Rev. Gavin Spens, of Knock—the next parish to Rowandean—and his wife were red-hot Non-intrusionists. But they were neither gentleman nor lady. Nor were they noble souls who, in the midst of their ardour, could be generous and tender to those who differed from them, who were not near enough to them to be so bound up with them, as in failing them to have succeeded in wounding them to the quick. The Spenses were in consultation with the Menzies on the great issues which the next Assembly was to bring about with the gaping breach in its ranks.

“But I hear young Mr Menzies is among those who have turned tail, and sneaked out of the battle. Such a living as I hear Midtryst parish is was more than he could resist or risk. It would be to give up the tasty morsel he had just gotten between his teeth,” said Mr Spens, smacking his own lips. “I am not forgetting that he is your nephew, Doctor, which makes the case only the more deplorable, while we are all aware he never learnt his mercenariness or his dishonourable trick from you. I call

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it fair dishonourable to have been with us from his trial sermon till after he was licensed, and on till we felt bound to tell the Court of Session and the Government we would stand the violent aggressions of the one, and the shilly-shallying of the other not a minute longer. Then, to be sure, my learned young gentleman minds on what side his bread will be buttered, and draws back."

"There is one thing I hope my nephew never learnt from me, Spens," replied the Doctor, quietly, "and that is to judge my neighbour, to put the worst interpretation on his actions, and to refuse to admit that we do not all see alike—and that it is only 'in another world that our eyes will be so cleared that it will be impossible for us to err."

"Oh! doubtless," mumbled Spens, considerably crestfallen, and making shift to get out of a scrape into which his forwardness and lack of delicacy had landed him. "I have not forgotten that blood is thicker than water, but you are such a marked man, Doctor, that I said the defection of one so closely related to you, with whom you had so great a work, is rendered the more conspicuous, and is the more deeply to be regretted. But there, I see the subject is a sore one, and we had better drop it."

"We had better," echoed the Doctor in tones not without significance—man of peace though he was.

Unfortunately, Mrs Spens had not attended to the two last observations, and struck in on her own account,—

"I understand the Commodore holds his son's lax views, and is greatly uplifted about the young man's so soon receiving a presentation and being settled—

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a sorry settlement when, as I have been informed, it is in spite of the objections of ever so many decent, conscientious heads of families. I have always heard that officers" (she pronounced the word "offishers") "are apt to be loose in their morals, but they make a great speak about their honour—their honour as offishers and gentlemen. I wonder what kind of honour he supposes his son has, to have stood up with the Evangelicals, and then sat down with the Moderates. I trow his fine manse that his father has furnished, and the pulpit gown that the leddies—take note the *leddies*, not the women of the parish, are to give him, turned the scales against the light weight of his honour."

"I beg your pardon, Mrs Spens," broke in Marjorie, "there is not a more highly moral man in the country—not even excepting Mr Spens and my father—than my Uncle Alan. And for my cousin Neil's honour—whatever mistakes he may make—forgive me, but you must leave that out of the question, for those who have known him best all his days know it is beyond suspicion. I wish every man and minister in the controversy's honour were as safe as my cousin Neil's is."

"O-h!" exclaimed Mrs Spens, leaning back in her chair, fixing her beady black eyes knowingly on the speaker, and prolonging the interjection to its utmost stretch, "I did not know the wind blew from that airt—I had not the most distant idea of it," she declared without affront, for she was as destitute of delicacy as was her partner. "I fancy it is rather I who should apologise to you, Miss Menzies. But oh! dear, is not this another trial for the Doctor?

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How will he put up with an Erastian son-in-law? I am afraid this will be a spoke driven into your father's popularity. But young folk never give heed to such considerations."

"No, no, Mrs Spens," Mrs Menzies flatly contradicted the inference, "there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage here. Do not run away with an impression so utterly without foundation. It is only that blood is thicker than water, as your husband said a minute ago, and Marjorie, who has been a good deal with her uncle in his son's absence, and was the young man's schoolmate and companion when they were both children, is inclined to stand up for her relations as might have been expected." Marjorie's mother had come to her assistance by silencing Mrs Spens, but though Mrs Menzies' opinions were not so very dissimilar to those of the visitor, she refrained, when the pair were alone together, from a single word of reproach or blame for Marjorie's impulsive defence of the objects of the visitor's attack.

"Because they are still nearer relations of father's than of mine," Marjorie told herself.

Time and momentous events did not stay their progress, till the month of May, lauded by the poets, but still coy and backward at Rowanden, only unsurpassable in promise, was there. The annual meeting of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland was at hand, and so was the final demonstration of the Non-intrusionists. Mrs Menzies had been rarely able to accompany her husband when he repaired to the Assembly, but this year was so exceptional, the interests involved in it were so far-

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reaching and vital, that an effort was made to arrange so that not only Mrs Menzies but Marjorie should accompany Dr Menzies. It was right that the girl on whom her father and mother set such store, of whose qualities they had so high an opinion, should have an opportunity of witnessing what was the event of the century in the Church in which her father was an office-bearer and she was a member, to which she, no less than her father and mother, was fervently attached. For while they had long fidelity to recall, what fervour surpasses the fervour of youth? One of Mrs Menzies' sisters was married to a professional man in Edinburgh, a layman in strong sympathy with the Non-intrusionist movement, and he had pressed on the family contingent from Rowanden Manse the hospitality of the writer to the signet's house, which made the visit practicable.

"Oh! Marjorie, what would I not give to be you, to be going up to the meeting of the Assembly—to see the grand action of our party." Since it had been her party, Katie had been much more at the Manse—her family entering no objection, and her friendship with Marjorie of the Manse had progressed apace. There had always been the obstacle of the difference in the temperaments of the women, so that Marjorie constantly experienced the feeling of holding Katie back, and throwing cold water on her mingled enthusiasm and cynicism. Katie was now in the simple bedroom which Marjorie shared with Nelly, on the pretext of helping her friend to pack her single *barège* evening frock along with her collars, berthes and gloves. "I do

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wish you would take a loan of my lace scarf and my cameo brooch and tortoiseshell comb—I sha'n't be wearing them, and will never miss them," begged Katie

"Thank you very much, Katie, but I think I had better go in my own clothes. People, if they had time to look at me, would only wonder where I had got those fine things. I used to fancy," she continued with a little sigh, "how nice it would be to go with father some day to the Assembly. It is such a delightful season of the year—Edinburgh is so beautiful and so gay now—what with the Commissioners' receptions—at Holyrood, if you please, and the Moderator's breakfast, and I should really have liked to listen to some of the speeches. But this time it is different."

"It is for the difference that I envy you," declared Katie. "What do I care in these days for Commissioners' receptions, even if they are held in a palace, and Moderators' breakfasts. But to see heroes and saints fling down their last protest along with their worldly goods—all they have to look to for their maintenance and that of their wives and children, and march out in triumph into the cold world like so many Pilgrim Fathers."

"Not altogether in triumph," said Marjorie, gravely, lifting her head from the little trunk over which she was stooping. "Think of the bonds that have existed since Reformation times, which they are rending, the memories and ties they are leaving behind—the comrades—the most indignant, the most earnest must call some who have walked with them hitherto comrades — they are forsaking — sentencing to

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spiritual ruin many of them say. Mutn't there be something of heart-break in the triumph?"

"You are thinking of your cousin Neil," Katie responded quickly, "come in from Midtryst, where he has had time to be ordained and placed, left sitting white-faced and stern—I can see him, Marjorie—in that half-empty hall, with gaps made by more faithful men than he, on every side of him."

"Don't, Katie, don't," implored Marjorie, her voice sinking to a pained whisper.

"Ah! he chose the world," Katie reminded her solemnly, "and he must dree his weird, bow down to Mammon, and eat apples of Sodom henceforth—though you and I were to weep tears of blood, we could not prevent it."

Down in the drawing-room Mrs Menzies, whose preparations were completed, was noting down some hints of which Nelly and Bell might avail themselves in her absence. The Doctor was restless for him. In place of staying still in his study and holding a conference with his elders—of whom Adam Pryde was the senior—he had done a thing most unlike himself, put off a step which was really incumbent upon him till the last moment next morning. He had been in and out, up and down. He had always been an observant man, he seemed to have become doubly observant.

"Mary," he said, examining the door by which he had come in, "do you know something has given way about this lock? Don't you notice the door is getting an awkward habit of bursting open—I have observed some of the other doors are in the same state—they should be seen to."

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"They should, Archie," she answered quietly

He went to the nearest window and looked long out into the prettiest of the flower beds, which Marjorie, with the aid of "the minister's man" and Duncan, kept in order. There the double white narcissus, which Lancashire folk call "sweet Nancy," nodded her fragrant head, in company with a host of her fair sisters, preparatory to giving place to the yet sweeter "red, red rose." One of those roses had been planted by the window, and had already shot up to a level with the highest pane.

"How fast that rose Hughie set is growing," was his next remark. "I believe that by another year it will be at the roof."

"I believe it will," she said, glancing at the rose leaves fluttering against the glass. He crossed the room and sat down beside her.

"Do you remember, Mary, what Zipporah said to Moses, for some occult reason of which we cannot be certain, that the great law-giver had been a savage husband to her? So have I been a hard husband to you. I took you from the ease and dignity of your father's house of Lossiemuir—"

"Do you mean, Archie, that I was not willing to go?" she interrupted him, with a sudden archness coming into the deep eyes which those around her had been so used to see care-laden, that the change was startling.

"God bless you, no, my dear. You have been so ready to share the burden and the heat of the day, that I'm sensible, if you could have taken it all on your woman's frail shoulders, you would have done it, and left me to bask in my study, writing my

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sermons and those nonsensical statistical papers at my leisure. I sentenced you to drudgery which you were never accustomed to, and deprivations you could not have dreamt of. And now, when the worst was over, and something like rest and refreshment in sight, when you are not so young and high-hearted—”

“Not so young, truly, with big boys and girls calling me mother, but I’m not aware that my heart has failed,” she remonstrated with spirit

“The struggle is all to begin over again.”

“As we have been carried through the first we’ll be borne through the second.”

“And it will be far, far heavier. We had a pittance before—we are casting our bread on the waters now. We know we’ll leave this pleasant house behind us, but for anything further that we can tell, we may not have where to lay our heads.”

“The liker our Master. Don’t you see it, Archie, the honour—the honour, the privilege to do it for Him?” cried the woman with shining eyes.

“And the bairns, Mary, Duncan with his education no further advanced, and Simmie—I’m not easy about little Simmie—not that he is little for his age now, the boy has outgrown his strength—he has shot up like the rose out there. He is horribly like a young brother I had who dwined away about Simmie’s years. I sometimes think, though it sounds foolish, he has a look of wee Archie, the infant we lost in his cradle. Simmie needs every advantage of air and comfort and nourishment—what if we are not able to give him the least of them?”

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Her lips were white, but she sat erect without swaying.

"He has a Heavenly Father as well as an earthly one. Can harm come to Simmie in his Maker's hands?" Then she turned upon her husband with something like fierceness, "Archie Menzies," she cried, "have you put your hand to the plough, and would you, too, draw back?"

He looked at her with his mild eyes never flinching.

"I would not," he said; "it seems to me that I see my duty, though I cannot presume to say that there are not two sides to every question, and that other eyes may not see differently from mine. I can but seek strength to do my duty, as I see it—letting wife and children go, with lesser things. I felt it laid upon me to remind you of the cost. But now that we've reckoned it, Mary, and that you've cast it behind your back like the true help-mate you've been to me—always bracing me to choose the better part, we'll renew the battle afresh with a good heart."

All Scotland—Edinburgh especially, the scene of the deed—was in its crowded condition, tense with expectation. It was not to behold the state progress of the Commissioner in the grandeur of the Queen's representative, not merely to watch the arrival of the new Moderator in his Court suit, with its knee breeches and silk stockings and the trains of simple—sometimes rustic—black-coated gentlemen who followed him, speculating who was who, and which side this man or that had taken in the struggle which had lasted so many years, it was to witness the end on this 18th of May.

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St Andrew's Church was packed with ministers and elders, and everyone who could put in the slightest claim to be present. The galleries were so densely crowded that, in view of the shortness of the ceremony which was to precede the solemn withdrawal of the protesters, it had been thought better to hire a room in the nearest street, from the windows of which Mrs Menzies and Marjorie, with their hostess and a small party of her friends, could behold a strange spectacle. It was that of the procession, for which in the thronged streets below men and women, not without an awe upon them which kept them curiously still, had waited for hours to see if the bold, uncompromising ministers would keep their word.

When the gathering was opened with the usual forms, the important business for which all present were waiting with bated breath was speedily dispatched. The Moderator for the previous year, in resigning his office, made a short declaration, and put down on the table the paper with many signatures containing the resignation of his living, and of the livings of the great band of ministers who were of the same mind. Then, walking at their head, he quitted an old battle-ground, leading the representatives of a mighty spiritual army. The tramp of their feet was heard in advance, and the stillness of the street was broken by one muffled shout,—

“They come! They come!” Even then there was little noise and no tumult among the rows upon rows of spectators who regarded the scene near at hand, or filled the windows above, looking

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down upon it—all were subdued. For the Scotch are a reserved as well as a dour race, and the mass of those gazers were the descendants of the men who had lain hidden in Aird's Moss, who had fought at Bothwell Brig, and testified in the Grass-market, and of the suffering women belonging to the men. Their emotion was far too strong and sacred to be expressed by huzzahing voices, clapping hands and rushing feet. It was rather with covertly wiped away tears of thankfulness than with songs of triumph, that such a mob saw its hopes fulfilled.

Walking three and four abreast, the four hundred and seventy-four ministers marched through the streets to the improvised hall at Canonmills, where they were to inaugurate the Free Church of Scotland. In the front rank, as was his right, was a big, grey-headed man, grave but calm—the first preacher of his day, the first political economist who by sheer genius and love of his kind made the one successful experiment which Scotland or Great Britain has seen, of succouring the poor without pauperising them. Near him walked little Candlish, the lawyer minister; Cunningham, the scholar of his party; Guthrie, whose finely-cut face beamed as Montrose's face is said to have shone when he went, clad like a bridegroom, to lay his head on the block; Gordon, noted for his meekness and gentleness throughout the bitter strife; Buchanan, the historian of the Disruption, and many another able and devout man—some of them content to dwell in obscure corners like Dr Menzies of Rowanden. But there were others in the ranks whose piety, like that of the Rev. Gavin Spens, had

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to hold its own against headstrongness, officiousness, shallowness, and grievous uncharitableness.

From the wilds of Orkney and Skye, from the clay beds of Caithness, from the drifted sands of Nairn, from the Braes of Mar and the Braes of Angus, from the lofty ridges of the Grampians and the deep hollows of the Teviots, from the herring and "haddie" fleets of Loch Fyne and Finnan, from ancient universities like St Andrews and Aberdeen, from commercial cities like Glasgow and Greenock, Paisley and Dunfermline, from the capital itself, guarded by its couchant lion, from the wan waters of the Border they came. Each black-coated man was in a sense king in his domain, be it great or small, for was he not "the minister," long the most learned man, the man of greatest cultivated sense, practical knowledge and, next to the laird, of greatest influence in the parish, as well as the ghostly counsellor of high and low among the parishioners—the man to be appealed to, confided in and, unless the applicant was singularly refractory, obeyed.

"Poor Mary! this must be a most trying sight for you," Mrs Menzies' sister whispered to her sympathetically.

"Why, Caroline, it is glorious," Mrs Menzies flashed round upon her. And then she paraphrased the declaration of a more famous woman in yet more tragic circumstances. "I tell you I was never prouder of my man than I am this day, when he is turning away from State doles and State tyranny."

Marjorie, too, was proud of her father and the company he was in. She also called their voluntary departure from their Zion, with all it implied, a

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glorious spectacle. But all the while she had a smothered ache at her heart, and a vision the reverse of that she had been exulting in, as mournful as the other was inspiring, would rise before her and distract her. It was that of a shrunken church in which the scattered men left behind, looked blankly at each other, across the ghastly gaps of the empty places, while one familiar young face, wistful yet stern, summed up the deficit.

A little more than ten years afterwards the Crimean War raged, and the gallant six hundred rode on their hopeless charge to take the Russian guns at Balaklava. A French general, commenting on the affair afterwards, defined it as "splendid—but not war." So the Disruption of the Church of Scotland was splendid—but of doubtful necessity, as time has proved. The Court of Session and the Government for the time being have attempted no further raids against the liberties of the Church and of the people. The staggering remnant left behind to recover their balance and refill their churches and manses, outlived the odium cast upon them by the partisan cry, and its thoughtless, reckless echoers, that the ministers who remained in the State Church were each and all lovers of their ease, of their rank, of the security for themselves and their families from difficulties and privations, rather than of their God, of their country, of the human flocks committed to their care. They manfully accomplished their task at the expense of however many hasty blunders. Their Church, instead of dying and waxing corrupt, is very much alive to this day, and honourable as ever for its godliness and good works

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But who shall dare to say that the charge at Balaclava or the Disruption of the Scotch Church was wasted devotion? Russia was impressed by the one, all Christendom was stirred by the other. The forlorn dauntlessness of the soldiers who fell at Balaclava may have helped to turn the day at Inkerman, and to ensure the fall of the Malakoff. The State and its law court might have ventured on further encroachments on ecclesiastical and national rights (though what motives they could have had may puzzle us to decipher). Patronage might have walked the land more unscrupulously, public opinion have suffered gagging and drugging, had it not been for that intrepid self-sacrificing march of the four hundred and seventy-four men of peace from St Andrew's Church to the hall at Canonmills.

CHAPTER IV

THOSE WHO WENT AND THOSE WHO STAYED

THE first action called for from the dissenting and withdrawn ministers was the finding for themselves, their congregations and their families places in which they could temporarily conduct public worship, in room of churches, and new homes.

This was a particularly difficult task in a remote and thinly-peopled, half-moorland parish like Rowanden.

At first the Doctor had thought of having an improvised half-shed, half-shanty run up not unlike the ecclesiastical centre of some very primitive and poor foreign mission station, but inevitably unsuited to the country and climate. It might, however, serve with the summer before them, till the funds that were pouring in at headquarters were so universally distributed by the organising faculty which had a great administrator behind it (the same whose pride it had been to keep his populous parish of St John's, Glasgow, with its numerous poor, off the poor rates, to wit, Thomas Chalmers), that churches would be built at the people's expense for those who had abandoned the State churches. But when Dr Menzies found it to be his duty to write to the principal landowner and patron of the parish to beg the bleakest morsel of the soil as a site for his

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present wooden tabernacle and future homely, jerry-built church, which should at least be weather-tight, and, as far as possible, in conformity with ecclesiastical obligations, he was met with a curt and positive refusal.

To Lord Sandilands, as to a minority of far better men, Scotch lords and lairds, the founders of the Free Church were simply a set of firebrands, disturbers of public peace and order, clamourers for power to which they were not entitled. To accord the slightest encouragement to them would be to injure their fellow-ministers, better men and better citizens, and to let loose license and insubordination. It was just possible that my lord's former messmate might have remonstrated with some effect in modifying the peer's extreme views. But alas! in this instance they were held in common by both men, while the Doctor had not spoken with his twin-brother since the afternoon when the Commodore had quitted the Manse of Rowanden shaking the dust from his feet, while the letters which Dr Menzies addressed to him afterwards were left unanswered. It was to little purpose that the Doctor continued in friendly correspondence with his nephew, when the elder man had a sensitive scruple which made him shrink from dragging Neil into the quarrel. It was appearing to use him as a go-between, to solicit assistance from the Doctor's better-endowed kinsman, on account of the condition to which the petitioner had been brought by the very principles and acts which the Commodore had wholly condemned.

The only other landowners in the parish were

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some of the small farmers who, in old war times when grain was at starvation prices, had scraped together money, and when opportunity offered, bought their farms. But they, like the yeomen of more extensive acres, were Tories to a man, whose instinct it had been to regard the Dissenters of an earlier day, the followers of the Erskines, and of predecessors of the Erskines, of Glass, of those known as "Burghers," Anti-burghers, Glassites, U P.'s (a familiar shortening of United Presbyterians), with supercilious contempt, much as bigoted, slenderly educated old Churchmen looked upon Baptists and Methodists.

They had held Dr Menzies in respect and affection, and even in some pride for gifts which they were not very capable of appreciating, so long as he continued the representative of the Established Church—to which the King or the Queen had sent a commissioner—a sort of regent to sit in the Royal Gallery in the Assembly Hall, every year since the Union. These parishioners, unaffected by the previous agitation, resented with sullen stolidity their minister's action in seceding from the State Church. In their eyes it was hardly respectable—it was lowering himself in station and dignity by many degrees. It was constituting himself little better than a roving ranter. They doggedly refused to follow him, or to aid and abet him by letting him have a morsel of their highly-prized land.

Their opposition was intensified by hearing that the Doctor's brother, the Commodore—for whom they had great respect as an officer and gentleman who had served his King and country for many a year, and had possessed sufficient influence with his

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fellow-officer, Lord Sandilands, to procure remembered benefits for their poorer neighbours—was ranged on the side of the law and the Government on the Church question.

Mrs Menzies and Marjorie of the Manse were cruelly disappointed and bitterly indignant. But the Doctor, if hurt and tempted to think that he had washed his hands in innocency in vain, and given his work for nought, so far as those members of his church were concerned, said little beyond hoping that they would be loyal to his successor. He was relieved from a difficulty, since, the number of his "hearers" being diminished, he could now engage the moderately-sized barn which one of Lord Sandilands' tenants—whom he had rescued from a drunkard's miserable end—had ventured to put at his minister's disposal for his Lord's Day's diets of worship, and for the evenings when he held his weekly prayer meetings, and his classes for young communicants.

The first time the barn was so employed, among the faithful small farmers, shepherds and hinds who gathered in resolute, manful and womanful fashion round their minister, Katie Pryde—the daughter of the Master and his wife—appeared, while they, with the little Master, tarried in their schoolhouse. That like their school and the parish church—in which, for lack of a stray probationer, no service could be held that day—was an appendage of the State.

Katie kept modestly in the background, still she did not hide herself, and even had she tried to do so, her voice, bringing tears to several eyes when she sang,—

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"Out of the depths to Thee I cried,"

would have betrayed her.

"What was Pryde's lassie seeking with me?" investigated the Doctor afterwards, evidently disturbed by the young woman's presence. "Neither her father nor her brother have come out; I must see about that."

"Why, father, have you not noticed or heard us speak of it?" remonstrated Mrs Menzies. "She has been one of the most regular attenders at the meetings this spring, and now there is not a more staunch Non-intrusionist, far or near. I did not think it had been in the girl, but she has taken a new thought, and is quite a changed creature. That is why I have not disapproved of her coming so much about Marjorie lately. Otherwise I might have objected to it; for, though she is undeniably clever, and sings like a professional who is a musical genius, she is not exactly a companion for a daughter of ours."

"If she has grown a staunch Christian—which is the main thing—she is good company for anybody. As for rank, we have a great authority for saying that poverty makes us acquainted with strange bed-fellows. We are poorer than ever, Mary—dirt poor, to be guilty of a vulgar colloquialism—and I am no longer an Established Church minister," observed the Doctor, with quiet humour lurking about the corners of his somewhat full mouth. "But apart from any question of social rank," he said more gravely, "I must have speech with Pryde concerning this freak of his daughter's."

"You will never go and discourage her, Archie?"

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urged Mrs Menzies; "her sincerity is beyond suspicion, and to put her out of the good she seeks cannot be well done." The Doctor's wife's genuine spiritual-mindedness and her native dignity did not prevent her from eagerly counting every attender on her husband's ministry in the barn, and from being prone to clutch at and make much of any fresh adherent, were she of no more importance than Katie of the Schoolhouse "Katie Pryde is of age — as old as Marjorie," began Mrs Menzies again

"Which is not to say that she has Marjorie's sense and discretion," declared the Doctor "And as she is her father's daughter, I must speak to Pryde How should I like it if Marjorie were to take it into her head to become an Episcopalian or a Papist without consulting me—possibly without my knowledge? Impossible, do you say? Woman, there is nothing impossible in this world Did I ever dream, when I succeeded my father, that I should end by being a dissenter and preaching in a barn? It will be by the dyke-side next."

"If you are doing your Master's work, what does it signify where you preach?" she pulled herself together to tell him after he had made her wince, certainly without doing it for the purpose.

But when he encountered Adam Pryde the next morning at the little post-office, and Adam started the subject frankly and simply with the by no means unfriendly remark,—

"I hear there is a rebel in my family, Doctor. So far as I am aware, none of my kind took to Conventicles when it was a breach of the peace and

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troopers were about ; but, as we have seen, it is never too late to begin. I've a notion Katie will come back to the auld nest ; but so long as she sits under the man who christened her and admitted her to the Tables, she'll get no harm, and she'll not be forbidden by me."

"Thank you, Pryde, for the trust you put in me. I will try not to abuse it," acquiesced the Doctor heartily, and not without perceptible gratitude. "You are a liberal-minded man, and if the rest of mankind were as liberal-minded, the sting would be taken out of those unhappy divisions which mark our time."

It was Mrs Pryde whose astonishment and distress knew no bounds, at Katie's perversity in insisting on being present at preaching in a barn, with a congregation almost entirely consisting of the poorest pauchlers and working men and women in the parish. It was fair discreditable, not to say low-minded. Her son, Jeames, who had not pretended to any great gentility, though he had gone to the college like the rest of the better-class boys, never proposed to accompany his sister to hear the Doctor, whom they had heard often enough to make his sermons no dentice to them. 'Deed, she was of opinion that though she did not dispute his orthodoxy, or for that matter the fact that he had the root of the matter in him, still, he gave them more moral essays than she cared to hear. Give her a fine rousing, fearsome sermon when the preacher was fit to ding down the pulpit, and there was not one of the congregation who did not shake in his or her shoes. If she had gotten her will, she would have

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put down her foot and stopped this folly of Katie's and this upholding of a Free Kirk, as if the Kirk had ever been in slavery! There was that fine young gentleman, the Commodore's son, not a word of his coming out of his newly-acquired church and manse in which he had scarcely got time to cool down. He had more wit than his uncle, the Doctor—all the wit that was going, she might say. For she agreed with the Master that his old friend, Archie Menzies, had no more worldly wisdom than the cat, and that if any man was to come out at the tail of the cart, that man was downright sure to be Archie. To think he had been content to hold one of the smallest of livings! It was not so long ago since the young gentleman and Katie had seemed pretty throng—ay, that would have been a fine story for Madam to stomach. And now Katie's mother could not tell what had come over the lassie, only it was easy to guess she must have dished what prospects she had in a certain quarter, by her madness in running after those besotted Frees. Since her father did not see fit to interfere, it was idle for her mother to try, when somehow or other Katie had always kept the upper hand, and gone her way from the time she was a bairn.

The single compensation which Mrs Pryde found in the changed aspect of affairs was Katie's intimacy at the Manse, which the Menzies were about to quit. No reverses on their part, nothing of the grudge which Mrs Pryde had long borne against "Madam," could alter Katie's mother's angry recognition that Mrs Menzies and Marjorie of the Manse, the sister and niece of the Laird of Lossiemuir, were the first

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ladies in the parish, though the one was too disdainful, and the other too careless, to make the show of their superiority which Mrs Pryde would have made.

After finding a substitute for the Doctor's church the next thing was to discover a substitute for his manse, and the second task was nearly as difficult as the first, and well-nigh as unsatisfactory. The parish, which after much searching investigation could only supply lodgings for the Commodore and his small household in the half-ruinous Tower of Pitthrisk, was not calculated to furnish accommodation to meet the greater needs of the Menzies.

At first Rowanden presented the dismaying outlook of an impossibility. It seemed there was no resource save for the family to retire to Kilcairnie and occupy a cheap house there, while the Doctor walked to and fro the seven miles between him and his parish, an arduous undertaking for anything like a permanence in the case of a man no longer young. But it was not to be thought of that he could continue to maintain the humblest trap and bit of horse-flesh, even were they no better than a spring cart and a tradesman's pony. The old dog-cart and horse must go along with the Ayrshire cow which had been a present to Mrs Menzies and her children from her brother, Nelly's fowls, and the pigeons and rabbits which, descending through a succession of owners, had been finally vested in Simmie.

"It must not be I will not hear of it, Archie," cried Mrs Menzies, at her wits' end; "you could not do it, not were it only twice a week, and you have been at their beck and call all these years.

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And you could not take care of yourself, you know you could not. There must be some working man's house, some cot house—cottars have families, and manage to dispose of them decently in small space, by means of curtains and the rest of it. I do not mind how or where I live, but at least I must be with you, and I should like to have Simmie under my care. I do not doubt any of my sisters would have the girls, and my brother always wished to bring up one of the boys. Duncan could go to Lossiemuir till something can be done, till the Church's funds are in working order."

"Oh! don't send me away, mother!" implored Marjorie.

"Or me!"

"Or me!" urged other voices infected with the desire for self-immolation.

"I can make up a bed for myself on the floor," suggested Marjorie.

"I can sleep upon two chairs," proposed Duncan.

"If things come to the worst"—Mrs Menzies faced the dreary outlook by anticipation—"part of the barn might be screened off, and beds put up—travellers frequently fare no better. When Aunt Caroline and her eldest boy and girl were with my brother-in-law in that trip to the north of Sweden which they took last summer, they had to rough it quite as much as that for pleasure. In Iceland and in our own western islands, when strangers have been storm-stayed, they have had recourse to the churches without hesitation—not that our poor barn is a church."

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"If it were," said Nelly, "there would at least be the pews to convert into beds."

"Oh! that would be joyful, joyful," sang Simmie, unconsciously appropriating the words and the tune of one of his Sunday-school hymns, while he vaulted in succession over a couple of stools in the spacious Manse drawing-room. Simmie's idea of life in a barn was borrowed from two sources—from a small troop of strolling players who had resorted to it, and under the patronage and censorship of the Doctor, and in return for free quarters with bed and board in the village for a week, consented to play Alan Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd* for two nights, to the delight and edification of crowded houses.

Simmie's second impression was derived from visits to the market town of Kilcainie on the occasion of the annual fair days, and to being treated to the inspection of the enchanting wonders of the caravans, the performers in which were mixed up in the child's memory with the players in the barn.

CHAPTER V

"FAREWELL TO LOCHABER"

AT last one of the poorest of the smaller farmhouses was found vacant, where it had not been sooner espied because it was situated at the northern and muirland extremity of the parish, fully three miles from Murray's Barn, which was representing a church!

Muirend farmhouse was divided from a rough byroad—ankle deep in mud and mire in winter, and in sand and dust in summer—by a straggling garden, fenced with wooden palings, once painted white, but for many a day a nondescript grey. The enclosure consisted of a regular kailyard, chiefly marked by breaks of long-legged green kail, stray, broken-down cabbages and weedy beds, showing here and there an onion run to seed, or a spindly carrot to indicate what their former crops had been, with the larger part of the ground lying waste, from which last year's potatoes had been dug, and now grown over with chickweed and nettles. The former dwellers in Muirend farmhouse had left it not later than the previous Martinmas, and it was now June. The farm had been annexed to another farm, and the tenant of both had not thought it worth while to cultivate the one kailyard. There was hardly a

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flower to suffer. The narrow border, which had been reserved for ornament, had been filled with herbs rather than flowers—thyme and costmary, balm and southernwood, and here and there intermingling with them a big, bouncing plant of honesty, or of monkshood, or a lonely tuft of “none-so-pretty,” and of battered, weather-stained red and white daisies. Not a rose, not a lily. The late dwellers in Muirend farmhouse had liked pungent smells, especially to refresh them when placed between the leaves of their Bibles in church on the Lord’s Day. But the homely men and women had not had time or taste for flowers which could not care for themselves.

There was the usual arrangement of a door in the centre, a window on each side, and three windows in a row on the upper flat. But the house was single, narrow, low-roofed, the small rooms both close and draughty, and with little more accommodation than could be got in a better sort of cothouse.

“It is impossible, Mary, quite impossible,” said the Doctor, turning away sadly from the refuge they had come to inspect.

“Not at all,” she said, with something like briskness. “It will just hold us all—a little of a tight fit, perhaps, but think of the comfort of being together under one roof, and actually in the parish, though at one end of it. We ought to be thankful. There is the living room and our room. The girls will have to sleep in the box-bed in the kitchen; as we cannot afford to keep a servant it will not signify so much. Duncan and Simmie can share the little bedroom opposite ours. There is one more bed-

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room—an attic—but the slates have been allowed to get broken and lost from the roof, the snow and rain have come in, and the plaster is so sodden with damp that I think if Charlie and Hughie don't get holiday teaching engagements, and run across to see us, we must have recourse to the barn after all." She said it cheerfully, as if it might be taken as a good joke.

She looked along the unsightly kailyard and put an equally brave face on it.

"Of course we'll set all that right presently. It is something to have a garden of any kind in which we can grow our vegetables. Many manse families, situated as we are, but set down in large towns, have not that boon. As for our flowers"—she gave a comical glance at the snip of a border—"possibly it is as well there are no more, for I do not think there is any grown-up person who can be spared to attend to them. Now *this*, ten-year-old Simmie could keep this in order." But Simmie was not destined to keep the tiny strip in order.

And at the Commodore's Lodgings, though the habitable part of the old tower was not large, there were more rooms than Neil's standing empty. Mrs Ord, crippled as she was, could find a place for the girls. As it was, the Commodore, but for Sailor Bill, would have been left very much at the mercy of a saucy slut of a servant girl who felt little of the awe which the departed Jenny had entertained where her master was concerned, and had still less of her devotion. But whether upheld by his rigid rules and soothed by his simple comforts, or deprived of both, the Commodore made no sign, and the Doctor,

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wounded to the quick by his brother's obduracy, made no further attempt to address him.

“If Neil had been at his father's matters would have been different,” sighed Marjorie. But it was true that the distance of county from county was considerably greater in the coach days of all remoter districts, even so late as the forties of the nineteenth century, than it is in the railway and motor times of the earlier years of the twentieth century. And as it happened, the distance between Neil and his kindred was to be still greater. There had been a Scotch church in the German university town where Neil had studied, the minister of which had been a kindred spirit and an intimate friend. He was now anxious for a break in his exile, and would fain exchange pulpits for the summer months with a ministerial brother at home—and Neil was almost as fain to gratify him. He was a little wearied and sickened by the strife of the Disruption, though he had succeeded in combating its effects at Midtryst. He felt a change of scene would be good for him. His student's proclivities hankered after the university to which he had grown attached, and the like-minded friends he would find there. He had full confidence in the man with whom he was about to change places. There was no heartlessness in his action; with all his cleverness he was but an inexperienced lad with no knowledge of the requirements of a family and the burden of a household. He was far from realising the straits to which his uncle might be reduced. The newspapers were full of the marvellous contributions which were being poured into the Free Church coffers. A rumour had reached

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him—for he was no longer in lively correspondence with the Doctor or any member of his family (why complicate matters by running the risk of making mischief between the Commodore and his son ?), and, to do the Commodore justice, the common report at an early stage might have found its way to him—that those members of Mrs Menzies' family who had gone over to the Free Church were backing the Doctor and financing him in the meantime. A man of his talents and repute would not be long overlooked, a house would be taken for the Menzies in Kilcainrie and provision made for the Doctor's driving backwards and forwards to his duties. It might serve to allay the irritation produced by a family quarrel and render reconciliation more hopeful if the Rev. Neil of Midtryst kept out of the way for the present.

The pleasant Manse of Rowanden with its wealth of big airy rooms and wide, well-lit passages, together with its corresponding wealth of fine old lawns and shrubberies and well-stocked gardens was in the flush of its June beauty. The chief of the birds in the countryside were carolling and rioting in its leafy shades, so that Duncan and the minister's man had found a difficulty in netting the fruit trees and the strawberry beds and raspberry breaks, the double rows of peas, etc., from the little singers' unconscionable ravages. A profusion of more roses than that Hughie had planted by the western drawing-room window were "budding fain" in loveliest promise, for the full performance of the flowering of the roses belongs to the month of July rather than to that of June in Scotland, unless in exceptionally early seasons. But to make up for the blushing delay of

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the rose queens, June is the month when the English may—the Scotch hawthorn—is in snowy abundance and the pale gold of the honeysuckle is shaking out its tentacles so that the bitter sweetness of the one blending with the honey sweetness of the other fill their neighbourhood with fragrance.

The Doctor had made a point of keeping every stone of the house and the offices, every tree and plant in the shrubberies and gardens in good repair and excellent condition to the last moment of his tenancy. Not that there is any “dilapidation” clause binding the minister or his heirs to discharge the cost of restoring the breaches in Scotch as in English Church settlements—simply that he might leave the place at its best for his successor. And now the very end of his stewardship had arrived. The Manse was still delightful and peaceful without, with no trace of what was happening save for a little straw of the packing adhering here and there, and disconsolate young figures flitting to and fro in the act of bidding farewell. But within it was a stripped wreck which the best organiser in the world could not prevent from being a scene of confusion and desolation. The larger part of the furniture was already gone—part of it to be sold, part to be stored, and the handful which was wanted at Muirend farmhouse to be transported thither.

Bell had been imperatively dismissed a couple of hours before.

“Oh, let me bide a wee longer for love, mistress,” the faithful elderly woman who had been with the Menzies since the Manse was her first “place,” who had helped to rear all the children soon to be widely dispersed,

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put in her wistful plea. "Let me just settle you at Muirend. Let me come across whiles (for love, mind) and lend you and Miss Marjorie a helping hand."

"Nothing of the kind, you foolish woman," Mrs Menzies told her with decision, and there was a smile on her fine worn face when she refused the petition. "You are to look after yourself, Bell, since your parents are both dead, and your sister is well married. You know we were never able to give you great wages, and you also know what you have given out of your savings for the necessity of the Church. It is now your part to provide for your old age, and we are glad, your master and I, that you have still strength and spirit to do it. If we are ever able to keep a servant again, which is doubtful, we'll let you hear. Till then, good-bye, Bell; many thanks for your good will. We'll miss you from the oldest to the youngest, and I not least of all—we'll not forget you. The Doctor will mind you in his family prayers, and we'll trust that every blessing will attend you."

When Marjorie turned from looking her last after Bell she found her mother's eyes resting on her with a mixture of pride and sorrow.

"You are my one right hand now, Margie," she said, "and I meant you for other things."

"Mother, have you not served us as long as I have lived? Is it not fit that I should relieve you of some of the service now? I wish with all my heart I could take the whole on my strong shoulders. You cannot dispute my right."

"No, my dear, but there is no occasion for that yet

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a while. And Marjorie, you mind what George Herbert wrote :—

“ ‘ Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws,
Makes that and the action fine.’ ”

Nelly was wandering about with her face tear-stained and swollen with crying. Duncan, in his sixteenth year, was an exaggeration of manliness and coolness as he nailed on the addresses of some boxes in the hall which were awaiting the carrier. But his lips twitched and he winked hard to dissipate any tell-tale moisture in his eyes when he came to his own tool-chest, for which it had been decreed that it had better go like so much besides. There had been a slight shower, but the sun was shining through it, and every leaf was glistening as if it were taking part in an exultant illumination. The last of Simmie's rabbits were to be taken away in the course of the afternoon by the beadle's rejoicing son, but Simmie could not be torn from the nearly empty hutches. He went between them and the pigeon-house where the pigeons could find food for themselves till some other little boys or girls came out of the unknown to feed them. At present the pigeons were cooing what might pass for soft lamentations. But Simmie was too disconsolate to be gratified by their sympathy, while he hugged to his breast his last white doe, resting his flushed cheek on her fur, and strangling a sob that he might not disturb her.

Marjorie, dry-eyed and composed, was walking after him seeking to keep him on the gravel paths, off the wet grass, and to divert his mind from his bereavement by an improvised description of Bell's

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sister's cat's kittens, one of which Bell had promised and would not fail to send him.

Mrs Menzies came out of the hall-door to bid the young people make ready to start to walk to Muirend before there were more showers. If Simmie got too tired by the way Duncan could carry him on his back for a bit, since Simmie was no weight. They must all be *home* as soon as possible, and Marjorie would have tea ready for Mrs Menzies' self and for "father" when they followed the children. The couple would do so presently, when Willie Brown and the beadle's son had come and were gone, and it was seen that everything was right and all the doors securely locked.

The Doctor would have had his wife go with their children while he appropriated the last offices, but she would on no account surrender them to him alone, she would stand by him in this as in all else. If it was grief to her and the others to abandon the Manse, what must it be to him who had a double connection with it? for he, as well as his children, had been born within its walls. He had spent his happy youth there. He had loved the old familiar place and people, some of whom had forsaken him, so well that he had shrunk from seeking preferment—translation—to some more lucrative post. And she, after one or two unsuccessful proposals, seeing how his heart clung to the past and its associations, had determined never again to seek to withdraw him from them.

When the husband and wife were alone, and nothing was left to be done save the shutting up of the house, she walked with him in silence over all

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the rooms—changed and almost ghostly, echoing their steps in the surrounding emptiness. She knew his thoughts as well as if he had spoken them aloud, when he paused for a moment before he passed out and closed the door on each well-known scene.

“ This was the room I brought you into first, Mary, that you might have a cup of tea after our drive from Kilcairnie, and to show you what a pretty corner of the garden you would look into from the west window, where your chair and your work-table stood waiting for you.”

“ In this room both my father and my mother died. She was called away early. He died full of years and full of peace. In yon corner there used to stand the great clumsy wooden cradle in which Alan and I were rocked.”

“ In this other room, on that other spot, the light wicker cradle rested in which all our children—yours and mine—from Hughie to Simmie have slept. And from it I lifted the cold little body of wee Archie in his long sleep to lay him in his bit coffin.”

The last place the husband and wife visited was of all places the kitchen, to rake out the embers of the fire on the hearth, which in Scotland is never cold except for the rapid once-a-week black-leading of the grate. For, according to Northern custom, summer and winter, night and day the central fire of the house is kept burning, preserved from extinction by the last act of such a maid-servant as Bell, who covers or “ haps ” the grate with the large slab of coal known as “ the gathering coal,” beneath which the

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fire smoulders till morning, or before it if any unusual circumstance renders it necessary, when a blow with the poker will split the gathering coal and the imprisoned fire will burst up in a red glow and a white flame. A cold hearth is in Scotland a symbol of utter desolation.

The eight-day clock had been left behind at the last moment. It had been found there was not a place for it in the small, low-roofed kitchen at Muirend. It had to stay where it was till it could be packed later and removed to one of the watch-maker's shops in Kilcairnie, where somebody might fancy it and buy it. The clock ticked reproachfully with unearthly distinctness in the stillness. The Doctor responded to its speech, went up to it, mechanically wound it up, as he was accustomed to do, and set it by his watch as if for the next week's business.

As he raked out the embers of the fire on the hearth and saw them sinking into white ashes, he looked round, showed a haggard face to his wife, and spoke for the first time.

"It is like the face of death, Mary."

As he was locking the front door, she turned quickly and plucked a cluster of Hughie's rosebuds, saying half apologetically, with a parched throat and dry lips,—

"They will come out in water and last for a few days, a bit of the Manse at Muirend."

Then the couple went arm-in-arm down the avenue in its summer glory, stooping and stumbling slightly, as if all of a sudden a score of years had been added to the burden they already bore. The

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gate was standing open as usual ; he closed it behind them, while they set their faces to trudge bravely—declining to own to each other how long the road seemed—the three weary miles to the comfortless farmhouse at Muirend.

PART IV

AFTER THE TEMPEST—CALM

CHAPTER I

"GEORDIE SITS IN CHARLIE'S CHAIR"

THE sequel to the Disruption was the filling as speedily as possible of the vacated churches by fresh presentations on the part of the patrons and fresh calls from the congregations, in order that the Established Church of Scotland might not be left a shattered remnant, with its ranks thinned as by the shot and shell of a battlefield.

In the haste and excitement of the rearrangement the rush to find enough probationers fit for immediate licensing and men already licensed, but who had not been promoted to parishes, there were inevitably many outside of the common presentations and transfers. "Sticket ministers," who had been unable to recommend themselves sufficiently either to patrons or people, all at once found themselves on the proud pinnacle of their ambition, "placed ministers," with pulpits from which each could deliver his message, manses, stipends complete and beyond dispute. Men wearied by suspense and disappointment, who had withdrawn from the pursuit of charges and livings, who had ceased to offer their testimonials or assert their claims, who had adopted other occupations, promptly threw up the temporary substitutes, and hurried back into the hiring market,

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no longer ominously crowded—on the contrary, promisingly empty of all save the hard-pressed, impatient hirers of labour. But few grave mistakes were made, for it was untrue that earnestness and piety had departed from the leaders and magnates of the old Church, the men to whom its honour and usefulness were dear. Even the less serious of the patrons were piqued into vindicating their rights by being conscientious and careful in their choice of presentees.

Rowanden remained for some time a drug on the hands of those who had to dispose of it. Prized as it had been by its former simple-minded, unworldly-wise ministers, it offered few attractions to ordinary aspirants. It was a poor living. It was situated in the remoter wilds. It was a house rather largely divided against itself, a considerable proportion of the parishioners—granting it was the poorer of them—having gone out with their seceding minister. Finally, the Manse was altogether out of proportion to the rusticity of the parish and the small income attached to it. The Manse was old enough to have been built at a time when the ministers of the Church of Scotland were not merely gentlemen by education and profession, but were frequently the younger sons of lairds with some amount of private fortune, in what constituted the well-descended, more or less exclusive county circles. For a mere son of the soil to attempt to furnish and occupy Rowanden Manse would be to entangle himself in many difficulties.

Accordingly, church and manse remained vacant for a period, during which it was only by the utmost exertions of those concerned for the welfare of the

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State Church that a stray minister was caught and constrained to conduct a stray service in the church, so that it could not be said that the farmers and their servants who had not quitted the “Establishment” were deprived of Christian privileges, unless they were guilty of the inconsistency of repairing to Murray’s Barn and waiting on the ministrations of the Doctor, which had now become abhorrent to their Tory principles, and their class and individual pride.

Eventually these gentlemen resented the neglect to which they considered they were subjected, and made blustering complaints to the authorities. In as far as the complainants could decide the county member, who must have the ear of the Government, was somehow the chief offender, and pressure was used upon Lord Sandilands, who, like Gallio of old, cared nothing for either party in the matter, to take steps to bring the situation to an end.

Adam Pryde, the Master, who, being a licentiate of the Church, had formerly come to the assistance of Dr Menzies in any strait, was not entirely behind in consenting when asked to preach once or twice in the vacant church—still, it evidently went against the grain with him, and he resolutely excused himself from doing more than he could not well avoid. He had watched with keen interest the conflict in the Church and its climax. He had not been without passing questions addressed to himself as to whether it did not concern him as a family man and an individual—whether, considering his qualifications and his original aim, he, too, might not come forward and obtain one of the many churches which

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were, one might say, going a-begging. But, in spite of that mortification of his youth when he failed to get a church, he was a complacent, contented man in possession of his school. He had saved money in spite of Lizzie Annie's small ambitions and extravagances. He was in easy circumstances. He could not change his position without considerable outlay, and a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. He had formed all his plans and worked them up to a comfortable certainty on the basis of his continuing parish schoolmaster at Rowanden, with Jeames for his assistant and successor. If he resigned his Mastership at this date he had small doubt that the little Master would step into his shoes. But, even with that assured, he had arrived at the age when a man is reluctant to alter all his habits, even to attain a rise in the social ladder and to fill a formerly coveted post. He had made up his mind to turn a deaf ear to all Mrs Pryde's hints and suggestions, and to let well alone, unless something very tempting offered.

There was only one post a day at Rowanden, when the letters arriving that morning at Kilcairnie reached the little shop in the scattered village by a local postman about noon. But if anything special, implying importance and haste, was delivered in the market town it was generally sent express by a messenger.

The sunset and the falling dew of a fine summer evening had brought the meal of the day, the easy, sociable supper of the schoolhouse. The Master had been detained longer than usual by a communication which had found him in the school, and Mrs

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Pryde had been fussing over the injury the delay would cause to the fried fish and the cherry tart already on the table, but to which no justice was done by any member of the family save by Jeames. The Master came in at last, flushed and bending his red brows as if in trouble and disquiet, and threw down an open letter he was carrying, between his knife and fork on the tablecloth.

“Look—see what came an hour ago, a presentation to this parish of Rowanden from my Lord Sandilands, approved of and attested by the Home Secretary in the name of the Queen, and forwarded by the member, to Mr Adam Pryde, parish schoolmaster, Rowanden. What do you say to that?”

Nobody said anything or did anything except give a gasp in common for two seconds. Then Jeames stretched out his hand to take the paper, and see that, though in the hurry and necessity of the case certain anticipatory technicalities and forms had been omitted, the letter was genuine, neither hoax nor forgery, and Mrs Pryde and Katie cried out in a breath,—

“Oh! Adam, what an honour!”

“Father, this is surely a great compliment,” followed by two platitudes.

“You can be the minister to-morrow if you like. No; you’re the minister already.”

“You are asked to fill Dr Menzies’ place.”

After that the fish might congeal in their own grease, the juice of the cherry tart might soak the pastry, and so soaking, subside wastefully in a pool in the pie-dish, even drip in being spooned out and

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handed round, in sanguine stains on the tablecloth—who would notice? who would care?

Adam Pryde was clearly much perturbed, and undergoing a severe struggle. When Mrs Pryde, in her character of hostess, reminded the little company that however uplifted they were they needed to eat, and it would be a sin to let good meat be lost, he pushed the plate and food from him, and would not even go through the pretence of tasting it, as his wife and daughter pretended. To be master where he had been in a sort man, to leave the schoolmaster's desk and take the pulpit in the very place where he had sometimes been made to feel, through the thick skin of his self-satisfaction that, after all, the dominie, notwithstanding his authority over babes and sucklings, was apt to see them grow up to undervalue and disregard, if not to deride, him, was prone to be held of small account, and that most frequently in a bucolic, illiterate community. He had received a call to sit in the presbytery on an equality with all the other members—one of whose servants he had virtually been—who had come to the school at intervals and examined into the efficiency or non-efficiency of his teaching, and called in question the progress of his pupils. And when one or other of the ministers was captious or out of sorts he had showed Adam far less consideration than he was accustomed to receive from the Doctor—ah! the Doctor—but he must not think of him yet a while.

The Master had not lost his relish for his work, especially with the little Master relieving him of the chief drudgery. He had never found his duties too

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heavy for him, but he was no longer so young as he had been. The time would come when the grass-hopper would be a burden, and then there would be a fell difference between what had been the Doctor’s quiet study, with the two sermons to prepare, and the humming hive of the schoolroom, its thoughtless, headstrong, sometimes contumacious youth to control, the files of blotted, faulty exercises to correct, the reading of fine passages in standard authors, a few of them in the masterpieces of the classics murdered in the performance, to endure.

The stipend of Rowanden Church was small, the Manse might well run away with it, but the Master was not without funds, while his family was small, and would certainly profit in another sense by the promotion. Katie was uppish like her mother, while at the same time she was a fine girl and a pretty girl, and what with her music and her books would grace any set, and she would certainly command entrance to a superior circle as the daughter of the minister, than as the daughter of the schoolmaster of Rowanden. One could not tell how far the advantage might not go in view of her marrying well.

Granting Jeames sat still as future parish schoolmaster, he would be in an infinitely better position with his father instead of a strange minister in the Manse and in the presbytery, whose concern so far Jeames’ school would be.

Could he preach with edification to the congregation? He had believed he could so preach in the old days when he was simply a probationer. He was not fool enough to reckon himself Dr Menzies’ equal in eloquence and learning, but then

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had not the quintessence of the Doctor's gifts flown over the people's heads—witness the influential group that had separated themselves from him. True, they had stood by the old Church, but men of little education as they were, of no knowledge to speak of, of civil or ecclesiastical history, would he not have had a greater hold upon them if they had properly understood and valued the man? As for the official visiting in the parish, the dealings with the poor, the sick, the erring, the Master had done a good deal of this in his capacity of elder, and undoubtedly the notion had occurred to him more than once that if he had been left without surveillance or interference to manage the whole concern, the session, the poor box, the needy, the culprits, he would have done it with a more thorough and lasting effect than was accomplished by the Doctor, who was not a born organiser, who was too indulgent, too soft-hearted.

And the best of this choice which was offered to him was that it came without his asking, without stipulation or question. It was not a request for him to preach before patron or people to be judged by his merits, in comparison with other men's merits. It was the final presentation, and though there was no call from the people as yet, the Court of Session had decreed that the absence of a call, nay, that all but a unanimous protest could not render a presentation invalid. It had come with such startling suddenness and unexpectedness it was like the work of fate, of Providence. But how could Providence will that he should take the place of a better man than himself, deliver his message from

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the pulpit in Rowanden Church—associated with the Menzies for two generations? For that matter there had been word at one time, before young Neil was called to Midtryst, before the troubles in the Church began, that he might follow his uncle, and then the generations would have been three. Instead, the Doctor was speaking to the poor of the people, for the most part, in Murray’s Barn, and his home and that of his family was to be in the poverty-stricken farmhouse of Muirend, while he, the Master, was proposing to take possession of the Manse—like a country house, of Rowanden. Was ever reversal of positions more complete, and on the first face of it, more unpermissible.

In all these cogitations it might have been remarked that not even in his own mind, from that day and thenceforth, did the Master style Dr Menzies his friend Archie, half patronising, half belittling him, and at the same time implying a degree of familiar friendship which, even in their college days, had not existed between them. It seemed as if necessity was laid upon the Master to speak and think of the Doctor with the utmost respect, even when he was consenting to rob him—but could that be called robbery which was simply to take when invited to take, what its former owner had laid down? Dr Menzies’ resignation of his church and manse had been voluntary. They were no longer his, and if Adam Pryde refused to accept them they might fall into hands far more hostile to the previous minister’s remaining on the spot, to sow strife in his divided parish. The Master pulled himself up aghast. If he had spoken his

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thought it would have been to cry, the Lord preserve him. He bore no hostility to the Doctor. The Master was not a man of delicate feeling, but he was as incapable of heartlessness as of unfairness.

Mrs Pryde, having eaten what she could of her supper, had not been silent. She had run on in loud self-congratulation and outrageous boasting of what was going to happen to her, and of what she was going to do, to which her husband had paid no heed till he was roused from his reflections by the exceeding glee with which she was drawing her pictures.

"You in the pulpit, Adam, and me in the Manse seat where Madam used to sit. It is a sore pity that she will not be there to see it, it micht' have done her gude. But she will not be at a loss to figure me and Katie in the Manse drawing-room. If she could see it with the new chairs and tables, and carpets and curtains with which we must replace her faded—ay, and darned—carpet I saw darns in the carpet the last time I was there—and her auld-world, out-of-date sticks of furniture—I believe some of it was there in the time of the Doctor's mother, and that was neither to-day nor yesterday. She'll not say a word, and she'll hold her haughty head high, so it please you, but I believe she'll be fit to burst."

"Lizzie Annie," cried the Master, angrily, "what are you saying? You're not in the Manse yet, as I'm not in the pulpit, and as a Christian woman it would be more becoming if you were examining yourself as to whether you and I were fit to fill the places of those who have gone before us, than to be triumphing over another woman's mortification and glorying in what you reckon your exaltation and her

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downfall. To judge by the temper you seem to be in, I would have great doubts, though you’re my wife, of your fitness.”

“Touts, Master,” cried the impenitent woman, too happy to be offended, “you are not beginning to preach already, just to lose no time in getting in your hand maybe, you should make some allowance for human nature. I’m sure I’ve said no ill of the Doctor.”

“You had better try it,” retorted the provoked man, losing all patience.

“And as for Madam,” resumed Mrs Pryde, “it is gospel truth written of the likes of her, that ‘pride comes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.’ She has not let her eyes light on the likes of me, she has treated us as if we were dirt beneath her feet—unless Katie—now that she has left the room—in the bairn’s craze about that weary Free Kirk—my lady would go a hunder miles to make converts. She was even gracious to Benjie now that he is Dr Peebles, and in a fair way to get on. I would not wonder though she were to throw Marjorie at his head, if that were to win him over.”

“Hold your tongue, woman, your speech is no scandal. Mrs Menzies never meddled with you, and her scorn is of your own creation. But, judging an innocent lady as you are judging her, I would say it is no more than you deserve if she passes you by.”

“Adam, how can you?” she began to whimper. “And what can have come over you that you should seek to mar the happiest day in my life? Man, I would not have done that to you. Mrs Hendrie”—naming the wife of one of the Tory farmers—“says

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they're looking for a judgment on the Doctor. He was once heard to say, in speaking of our Auld Kirk, might his richt hand forget its cunning if it were ever raised against the Kirk of his fathers. Now, if he were to have a stroke and not be able to lift his hand to his mouth or his pen, he would be condemned out of his own mouth."

"Woman, leave my presence till you are in a better frame of mind."

The command was so imperious and unlooked for that Mrs Pryde actually obeyed; she was hurt and affronted, but in her delight at the prospect—of whose fulfilment she admitted no doubt—that she was to reign in Rowanden Manse, she only felt the wound superficially. She sought out her daughter and found Katie in her own room, sitting on the front of her bed intertwining her fingers and staring abstractedly before her.

"Katie, I think your father's having been presented to the living has gone to his head," she made the slight complaint. "It is as if he were vexed and not pleased. He lost his temper and spoke to me as I never heard him speak before. But I daresay he'll be all right when he has slept upon it. Katie, when we're settled in the Manse I think you should call me and your father Mamaw and Papaw, instead of father and mother—before folk, at least, if not between ourselves—it sounds more genteel."

Katie gave an odd laugh which dwindled into a hysterical giggle.

"Marjorie of the Manse never said anything save father and mother, indeed, I've heard her speak to her father as 'Daddy.'"

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“Never mind what she said or did—she might be able to carry off terms and acts that you had better not attempt. Besides, she is Marjorie of the Manse no longer, it will be Katie of the Manse from this time henceforth—you are to set the example, not to take it now from Marjorie Menzies.”

Katie had her own battle to fight, her own spectres to lay. From her youth up she had envied Marjorie for being the daughter of the Manse instead of the daughter of the schoolhouse. From her earliest years she had been conscious of the higher surroundings and the higher atmosphere of the Manse, though Marjorie Menzies had porridge for breakfast where Katie Pryde had tea and toast, bacon and kipper; and Marjorie Menzies wore the plainest, least expensive cottons and woollens, while dear materials and all that a provincial dressmaker’s art could do were lavished on Katie. As she grew up she probably exaggerated the advantages of the Manse. With her æsthetic tendencies and her love of beauty the original space, refinement and bowery loveliness of the old commodious, comfortable country house, with its avenue, shrubberies and gardens laid hold upon her and fascinated her. Some of her mother’s kindred in Glasgow had acquired such wealth that their income exceeded that of Lord Sandilands himself, the chief laird and patron of the living of Rowanden. They rolled in vulgar luxury. Katie had visited them. But the girl had finer perceptions, she never for a moment compared the ignorant, self-indulgent household to the Menzies of the Manse. What cared Katie for a faded, darned carpet and comparatively bare board, which was yet always

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dainty, or for Mrs Menzies' work-worn hands when her speech was that of a lady, of an intellectual, high-minded woman, good at the core?

To be transported to Rowanden Manse, to lead the life which had been led there (Katie had got too short a time for consideration to realise that to do so there must be transformation as well as transportation), that her nearest kindred must undergo a change, if the tone of the life of the Prydēs at Rowanden Manse was to resemble what had been the tone of the life of the Menzies. The place was the same, but the people, who do so much to make the place, were different. Katie could fancy herself sitting with her book under one of the shady trees in the avenue or picking the flowers—the mignonette and sweet peas, the gillyflowers and irises—which always grew in such abundance in the Manse flower garden, but her fancy did not go so far as to picture what her mother would be doing in the drawing-room, what her father would be saying in the dining-room, what talk of the school on its most prosaic, sordid side Jeames would bring with him when he joined the rest of the family. When her father was a minister (she called him in her mental conversation by the English term "clergyman" not quite correctly) he would be on an equality with other clergymen, and on more or less intimate terms with them. When Neil Menzies was staying at the Commodore's Lodgings, though his uncle was the Free Church minister, he could hardly avoid, with his father a member of her father's church, visiting at the Manse, preaching for Mr Pryde, gradually advancing in intimacy, while other young men like Neil would not be

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absent. What would Benjie—Dr Peebles—say to that? She could not fit him in at the Manse though he was clever, professional, and had a Byronic touch about his dark, good looks, his dash of sombreness and cynicism. She was afraid he must drop out of her circle, which would be a pity, for she would miss Benjie.

The news that the Master had been presented to the living reached Muirend farmhouse on the following day. The Doctor whistled softly, an unclerical habit he had; Mrs Menzies and Marjorie turned expressive looks on each other. It was Nelly, Duncan and Simmie who raised an outcry.

“I am glad the fowls and ducks were sold,” said Nelly, solemnly, “she is too fine to look after them. Katie never had pets, and they should not be left to the care of servants.”

“I wonder who will be Master in his place?” speculated Duncan, his own interests usurping his attention, since he had not begun to understand that after the holidays were over, there was no more schooling for him, and no university as there had been for his brothers.

“Will he give the elders ‘pawmies’ when they will not do what he wants?” suggested Simmie, open-eyed at the idea.

“They, the powers that be in the old Church, might have done worse—a great deal worse,” pronounced the Doctor, deliberately. “Pryde is an upright, conscientious man, who will do his duty under whatever conditions. He is a religious man in his way—I have seen that in his discharge of his obligations as an elder, and I do not think the worse of his religion because he does not bring it often into

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his speech. He was trained for the ministry, and he had a good character, and I mind held a good place in his classes at college. He is a mighty deal more reliable than some thoughtless birkie new off the irons, who means no harm but has not got time to lay the matter to heart. My doubt of Pryde is that his sermons may be rather in the academic strain, too much so for his hearers."

"They will be good enough for them," said Mrs Menzies with the only bitterness which had been shown, and surely it would have been beyond human nature if she had been free altogether from it. "You know what happens when pearls are cast before the creatures that can only trample upon them. His pedantry may impress them, and her finery may do the same. Nelly speaks of her as fine, and when I come to think of her, she showed, did she not? the taste for finery which was to be expected from that style of woman."

"I was thinking of Katie," said Marjorie, slowly. "I suppose she will stay in the old Church now. She will wish to do what is right. She has taken things so seriously lately. But she has been quite unaccustomed to parish work till within the last two or three months. And I am afraid she is injudicious, and she is flighty and has moods, oh, dear! I wonder what the girls in my class—those of them who have not come to Murray's Barn—and the old folks will think of her, and how they will ever understand each other?"

"Oh, they will get on if they do their best," said the Doctor. "There is always a blessing on those who do their best. And it is wonderful how people shake down and accommodate themselves to each other."

CHAPTER II

WHICH WAS THE VICTOR AND WHICH WAS THE VANQUISHED ?

WHETHER Simmie had, after all, caught cold in the grief of parting from his rabbits during that last "sunny shower" before he left the Manse, whether the climate of Muirend in the north of the parish was colder—certainly the rickety little farmhouse was far less impervious to wind and wet than the well-built, well-seasoned Manse—the boy fell ill almost from the day of the Menzies' flitting. Probably what his father had feared was true, the seeds of consumption were sown in him from an early date, and it wanted only the least misadventure to develop them, while the end of the summer and the early autumn proving wet and stormy in the Rowanden district, it was the last disaster sufficient to finish the little tragedy. Simmie was not one of those children who are marvels of precocious piety. He had never been strong enough to get into much mischief. He was a sweet-tempered, affectionate child, naturally docile, punctual and reverent in saying his little prayers, and rather given to go singing his Sunday school hymns, together with such songs as he had picked up from his sister Nelly and his former servant, Bell, who were both musically disposed, so long as

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he was able to play about the house. When he became more and more feverish, weak and suffering, he displayed a good deal of the wonderful patience which children often manifest in pain and sickness.

"You are my pet, Simmie," said Marjorie one day out of her sore heart. For there was just the difference of age between the elder sister and the youngest of the family to awaken in the young woman the first tender thrills of motherliness. But Simmie corrected her.

"I am everybody's pet, Margie," he told her with innocent satisfaction.

It need hardly be said that his mother was devoted to him. She sent Duncan to sleep in the Doctor's room that she might be with Simmie, nursing him all night as well as all day, as if the strength of her will and her love would wrest Death's prey from Death. She seemed invulnerable to cold and fatigue, while she did not expose herself unnecessarily, or distress her family by refusing any comfort they could give her. She was reasonable as ever. She did not break down whether in Simmie's presence or absent from him. She was less overcome than the poor Doctor, who, coming wet and weary from his three miles' walk from the village, did not find any good news of the invalid awaiting him. She rarely even yielded to such irritation as overcame her when discovering Duncan and Nelly—unused to the restrictions of the small, inconvenient sitting-room—wrangling as to who should get the greater share of the light from the one window, for the map he was drawing and the mat she was making, and at the same time, keep out of each other's way.

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"What!" the mother indignantly cried. "And is this all your affection and training are worth, that they cannot stand being called for in close quarters?" And then she quoted the grim saying of an old woman in the village to her unruly, quarrelsome children: "There will be no fighting for room when you are lying side by side in the kirkyard." But she did not decline to do what could be tried about the difficulty of room, intensified as it was by Simmie's sickness. An opening was found for Duncan in the bookseller and stationer's shop in Kilcainrie which his father and uncle had patronised. Duncan had to rise at half-past five, and Marjorie had to do the same in order to provide him with breakfast and allow time for the walk to the town. It was he and not his father who came bound to accomplish the seven miles to and fro morning and evening. But Duncan was a strong, healthy boy, and he had enough good grit in him not to complain; while he had his dinner and tea with the other employees in the shop, and he was only due at Muirend for his supper and bed. As for Nelly, the first time her tendency to sore throat appeared in an aggravated form, a renewed invitation from one of her aunts was accepted for her, and she was promptly dispatched where she could be fed up and sheltered from all hardship.

The general service fell to Marjorie, who did it all unaided, thankful that she had served a sufficient apprenticeship to her mother and Bell to be not without some experience. She scrubbed and cooked and washed, blacked her father's and Duncan's boots, and her own and her mother's shoes, till her hands

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were more wasted and worn than her mother's, though she did not despise such precautions as she could take to protect them. Sometimes she sought to divert himself and Simmie, by imagining that he was a settler in the Australian bush, set aside from work for a time, and she was his wife "doing" for him and the household, for of course there were no servants in the bush. When she was seeking to inspirit herself, she reflected that since the Manse was left behind, and the Commodore's Lodgings closed against her, and Neil gone, and Simmie so much worse than he had ever been before, so that he engrossed her mother's whole time and attention, it was well that for things outside the sick-room door, and in the case of her father and Duncan, all should be dependent on her, keeping her hands full of work every hour, leaving her so tired at night that she slept the moment her head was laid down on the pillow. She was thankful for her young health and strength. She could not have borne to be sent away like Nelly to be coddled and grow fat, at a distance from her family and their troubles. But poor Nelly could not help it, for it was her nature and her physique, and Marjorie supposed if she had been like Nelly she would have got grace to stand aside, and let others bear the burden and heat of the day.

• Marjorie's chief pleasure was the unfailing excellence of her father's preaching—indeed, it seemed to her he had never before spoken with such simple, pure spirituality, something apart from the bitter strife of tongues, and from the grossness of worldly lusts, something which might have echoed from Heaven's gates as he spoke in Murray's Barn

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There the congregation, instead of diminishing, did not waver, in fact was being supplemented by residents in other parishes and worshippers of other persuasions, attracted by the golden mouth of the man who had left all in order the better, as he conceived, to follow his Master.

Another recreation Marjorie could occasionally snatch when the evenings were still long enough, and the water-laden clouds would draw aside after a day of rain, and there would be a brief interval of clear light, as if the sun which had gone down were shining somewhere just out of sight, enough to give radiance, though not to send forth heat. And when Duncan, as happened usually on Saturdays, was earlier home and was not too tired, and they could go a little round among the members of her father's barn-church, as many Free Church ministers' daughters and thousands of young lady adherents were doing, collecting the pennies which were to help to swell the aggregate of the Sustentation Fund with its marvellously perfect machinery for universality and Presbyterian equality within the bounds of the Free Church. Then Marjorie enjoyed the dignity of working for her Church as well as for her people.

It was on such an evening when Marjorie was abroad with Duncan, and Mrs Menzies was with Simmie, that the Doctor himself had to open the front door in answer to a low, tremulous tap. The shades of evening were dimming the curiously clear light of half an hour before, but enough remained for him to distinguish Katie Pryde, who must have traversed what was still only a kail-

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yard and was standing in front of him. At the moment of recognition, he remembered only that here was Adam Pryde's daughter, who had been a companion of Marjorie's when she had leisure for companions, whom he had known all her life. Had he not christened her, patted her on the head till the head grew too high for such a greeting, received her into the Church? Yes, and the lassie had followed him to Murray's Barn and been one of his hearers there with her father's consent, till Pryde became the Established Church minister of the parish. The conflicts and feuds between Established Church and Free Church were rather blurred in his mind at that moment, and any hazy recollection that he had not seen her for a number of weeks only stimulated his hospitable inclinations.

"How do you do, my dear?" he said in his kindly manner, taking her hand and shaking it, though she rather held back from the friendly handshake. "Come into the parlour. Marjorie is out, but she will be back presently," and he showed her into the shabby little living-room—all the study that was left to him—which looked the shabbier and more comfortless in the cold light with the Doctor's papers scattered untidily about. He drew forward the chair he had recently quitted for her, but, to his consternation, she started up from it the next instant and burst into a passion of tears. "Sirs! Sirs! What is it, Katie?" he besought her. "Is anything wrong? Not with the Master—the minister, I would say—or your mother, I hope. Sit down again. You must have had a

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pretty long walk if you have come all the way from home. There, compose yourself, take time, and tell me all about it. It may not be so bad as you think."

But Katie would not sit down as she sobbed out,—

"To think you should open the door for me, Dr Menzies—that you should want to shake hands with me!"

"Why should I not open the door for you?" he inquired, thinking it best to appear not take the matter seriously. "I opened the door to the bread cart five minutes ago. Happily, as you can see for yourself, the distance from my chair to the front door is not so great as to make the journey worth mentioning. As to shaking hands—'the hand of Douglas is his own,' you ken, Katie, but mine is free to gentle and simple who have any title or any desire to shake it—not to say to a nice young lady like you."

"Oh! don't talk like that, sir," she protested, with a little wring of her gloved hands. "It sounds as if you were mocking me, though you are too good to do that—me who have been such a miserable backslider."

He looked mystified for a moment, and then his face brightened.

"Don't call yourself names without giving a reason for it."

"Oh! you must know, you must guess, at least. I heard all the arguments, and I agreed heart and soul with the Disruption—I well might, for I seemed to get new life from it. I have been worse than a mere silly, careless, jealous, discontented girl, Dr Menzies," she declared, opening wide her dark, soft

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violet eyes in her earnestness, and fixing them upon his mild, wise face. "If I had gone on I believe I would have come to questioning, and denying the grandest truths of religion."

"That would have been a pity in your father's daughter."

"Say rather in one who has sat so long under your ministry and been so unmindful of it, so undeserving. But the awakening, the quickening, had come, and I was fain to come out of the Church with the rest, for I was as keen a Non-intrusionist as my betters, and I think my father would have let me. But there came that unhappy presentation to the parish, and so we've taken your Manse and driven you into this house. I'm in Marjorie's place, and go about at my pleasure, and she works like a servant, and dear little Simmie is ill, ill"—she could say no more.

"Katie Pryde," he replied, clasping his hands behind his back and standing, "I never thought your father's daughter could be so illogical. How could you take the Manse from us when it was no longer ours to give or take, when we had renounced it of our free will? What ails this house? It is a thought small, maybe, but better than we are have abode in smaller, and we were right glad to get it. Why should Marjorie not work like a servant if she chooses, above all when it is for her own people? The fact that your people do not need such service does not make her lot harder. Must her lot be evil because yours is good? I thought you knew the Scriptures better, my lassie. As for our bairn, whom the Lord has smitten, he is in the Lord's hands." It was the Doctor now who could say no more.

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"It is all very well for you to say this, sir; it is like you, what I might have expected," she continued, still in dead earnest. "But I know better—forgive me for contradicting you—I am punished. I feel my soul slowly starving. I get no good from my father's prayers and sermons, though I believe he does his best, and I know, I know that my father and mother have been far too good to me, and that I have been ungrateful and rebellious, but before I perish of soul-hunger, before I cease to care and become a cast-away, let me come back to you. If I had only stayed out when I followed you to Murray's Barn! If I had not loved the world and accepted the bribe like the rest of them, and stayed in an apostate Church, because my father was ordained one of its ministers—"

"Stop!" he said imperatively, "you do not know what you are saying. You began with calling yourself names, and now you're throwing them broadcast at other people, which is not an improvement on that sort of game. Of course you stayed in the Church and went with your father—one of the first to support him. You had not forgotten a certain primary command, 'Honour thy father,' and so on, you have repeated it to him many a time."

"No, it was not that," she maintained obstinately, half wondering and the least bit defiant. "It was all pride and vanity. Besides, are we not told, you know so much better than I," humble again in the depths of her sincerity, "that we must leave father and mother and follow Him—that there is nothing on earth, not even their care and kindness, that we can accept as an exchange for our souls. Do let me

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come to you, sir, and be one of your congregation," implored Katie, once more worked up to desperation, and with a scared look again in her eyes. "If my father says I must leave his house and he will do nothing more for me, I can get work of some kind—teach or go out as a servant—like Marjorie. And I will walk across on Sunday, and if I can to the weekly prayer meeting, and if you will allow, although I need not say I am sensible I am not worthy, I could lead the singing."

The last proposal was sufficient to prove that Katie, clever and independent as she was, had still a good deal of the child about her. It bore reference to the incident that the Doctor's old precentor had not abdicated his precentor's desk because the Doctor had resigned his pulpit. The consequence was that, though the precentor himself was but a rough, uncultured diamond, the singing in Murray's Barn was still rougher and more uncultured without him. Indeed it left so much to be desired that it was worrying the Doctor, who thus felt conscious that Katie's wistful addendum to her petition was little short of an act of gross bribery and corruption.

He shook his head, not without a twinkling in his eyes.

"Nothing of the kind, mem, you'll not tempt me, Katie, you'll stay where you are with your father, and try and make Alick hear reason with regard to some of his unnecessary flourishes. As to leaving what you hold more dear for His sake, do you think you'll honour Him in that by disobeying the other command? Do you imagine you can fulfil the second injunction by breaking the first? Do you not mind what was said about not one jot or tittle

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of the law falling to the ground? If your father had been a bad man who ordered his child to commit bad actions, there would have been reason in resisting and withdrawing from him. But do you, his daughter, thank God this moment, and every time you're on your knees, that it is quite otherwise. Now, Katie, I'll give you an instance of his goodness—he has been trying by letter, ever since he was placed, to persuade me, the Presbytery and the Court, what is fair nonsense, that I am entitled to half of his first year's stipend. He is an honest and a good man, one to be proud of; you'll hear nothing but what is good from him. Do you think the Lord can only feed your soul in one way, or by one man? There is such a thing as being selfish for your soul as for your body, as pampering it with the dishes it likes, without asking if it has a warrant to use them, or whether plain and short fare may not be the best for it in the end. I've a notion that is one of the ways in which the precious immortal thing is risked. But, there, be a good bairn and do your best at home, and in the parish, and believe that is serving your Master. See, it is getting too dark for you to go all that way back alone, wait till I get on my waterproof and I'll give you a convoy." The Doctor rose a little stiffly, with the faintest sigh, for he had traversed the road to the village and back once already, in the wet that day, and he was more easily tired than he used to be.

But she hastened to prevent him.

"No, no; thank you very much, sir, but you need not, you must not. There is no occasion. Peggy Budd, who is in our service, has come to see her mother at the next cothouse. She was to wait for me.

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I am to call for her and we will walk home together. But, oh, Dr Menzies, if I am not to have the privilege of joining the Free Church, if I must stay where I am, surely you'll let me come here and help Marjorie. My father will not object to that, rather he will be pleased."

"I believe he will. Come and welcome, Katie—and make my best respects to your father." The Doctor finished the conversation with much cordiality and courtesy, though he had small faith in any help Marjorie would get from Katie Pryde. What a that slim, excitable, unbalanced lassie. He rather thought his strong, self-possessed practical Marjorie would be loth to have Katie stand in her way. But the bairn was honest in the middle of her fancies and frenzies, and it might be a relief to her to think she was of use to them.

And as a matter of fact Katie's assistance resolved itself very much into looking on and doing the most of the conversation while Marjorie did the work.

"Poor Katie! she means to be kind, but I cannot so much as trust her to peel the potatoes, even if she were in a dress fit for it," Marjorie reflected "Potatoes are valuable since the disease destroyed so many of them, and she would cut away half of the potato and fling it with the peelings into the pail, while she would not have finished till it was time for the potatoes to come to the table."

Katie did the talking, and with a perversity or fatality, or both, which was somewhat characteristic of her, her talk would very often turn to Neil Menzies and to the destruction of his faith, which was to be the result of his return to Germany. She seemed to

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take a gloomy pleasure in plunging Neil into the hollow and heartless depths of infidelity, and in causing his cousin to realise his hopeless position. It seemed to have a morbid fascination for her which she desired to share with another, just as in early days she had conjured up, and called on Marjorie to contemplate, dark passages in Benjie Peebles' college course, which would yet come to light to his disgrace and ruin, though he was sorry for the past and trying to redeem it.

"All learned Germans are not unbelievers," Marjorie would try to break away from Katie's dismal anticipations. "I do not know much about them, but I have heard father say Strauss had overthrown the faith of many, but then my father has a great work with Neander and Bunseæ. My cousin Neil is no longer a boy, he is a man and a minister, and I have this confidence in him, that he would not stay a day longer in the Church, if he had ceased to believe in the truths he had vowed to teach. So long as Neil remains minister of Midtryst I will be certain that he is no free-thinker in disguise."

But Katie was not to be reassured.

"Your father is too tolerant and hopeful," she told Marjorie very seriously, "and if he were not so good a man it would be dangerous. You know purity—purity of doctrine comes before peace, first pure and then peaceable. You ought to be on your guard, Marjorie, for you have something of Doctor Menzies' easy temper, which is apt to tend to laxity in principle and practice—and then where are we, I would ask? You do not know how wicked the world is."

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"And how do you know, Katie?" Marjorie could not resist administering the antidote of a little raillery to counterbalance Katie's high-flown pretensions.

But Katie did not condescend to explain how she came by her superior knowledge.

"You have no idea how base and deceitful men can be when their interest comes into question. Remember, your cousin Neil was one of the so-called Evangelicals who, when it came to the pinch, failed Chalmers, and Guthrie, and Neil Menzies' own uncle who had been a second father to him."

"Don't say that again, Katie Pryde." Marjorie put down a kettle and stood at bay. "My father never said, never thought, that his nephew had failed him. He does not condemn Neil for remaining in the Church, no, nor many another Established Church minister, your father among the rest. And you cannot say we are called upon to be his judges."

Katie could not say it, so the conversation dropped.

In the end, Katie's aid consisted mainly in going on a few errands and in occasionally singing one of her songs to Dr Menzies in the gloaming, which is suited to such singing, when it was not light enough for him to see to read or write. Then her beautiful voice raised in the ill-deafened house reached as far as Simmie's room, and the sick child, with his fondness for music, craved a song to himself, and Katie was taken to his room. When it was found how her singing pleased him, and soothed him after a sleepless night to sleep, she came regularly, never grudging the time or the walk, putting aside other,

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and, as it sounded, more attractive engagements to gratify Simmie—herself as gratified as the boy. And not even Mrs Pryde, the most opposed to Katie's "traffic with the Free Kirkers at Muirend," had the heart to interfere with the fulfilment of the obligation which Katie was so eager to discharge, and took such pleasure in discharging.

At the very time Katie was constituting Dr Menzies her father confessor, Adam Pryde was giving his version of the situation to his son in the Doctor's old study. It was a comfort when he was vexed to have Jeames to speak to, a solid, sedate chield like Jeames, who would listen and sympathise and tell no tales.

The little Master was now the full-blown master of the parish school, and was come to have a crack with his father in his sanctum.

Jeames was looking round him complacently, and remarking with honest filial pride,—

"This is a grand set down for you, father; there is not a finer room in the Manse than this. You should be as happy as a king with nothing to disturb you, and all you have to do to attend to your own books and papers."

"It is little you ken, lad," retorted Adam Pryde, with an approach to a groan. "My advice to you is do not seek to change your 'gang' when you're midway through life, and, above all, do not step into the shoes of a man who, though he has turned himself out and stripped himself by his own deed, is a better man than you."

Jeames, who by the light of his own worth had suspected this trouble, looked at his father. The ex-

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Master had a harassed, careworn appearance which he had never borne in the days of the school drudgery and toil. There was nothing about him now which suggested that he was cock of the walk. Much of the old self-confidence and conceit had been taken out of him. He had even a deprecatory air to his very son and former assistant, as he seemed to appeal to him for a measure of justification as well as commiseration for his difficulties. He was thinner, there was more of grey in his bristly red hair—he had aged more since the Disruption than the Doctor had aged.

"It has not been your fault, sir," said Jeames with comforting conviction. "Your conscience did not bid you leave the Church. You were not carried away by arguments which did not satisfy your reason. You have been willing to do all you could to make it easier for the outgoing minister. I am sure you have not left a stone unturned that could be of service to him."

"That's all very true, Jeames, my man," acknowledged the minister of the Established Church of Rowanden, but with a despondency that was foreign to his nature. "Still, you will allow that for me to sit here and know him condemned to yon miserable hole of a farmhouse, his daughter playing the part of a maid-of-all-work—Katie tells me she slaves from morning till night—his bairn dying, is hard lines for a man of common humanity."

"It is to your credit that you feel it, father," interposed the loyal Jeames.

"I saw him yesterday," went on the minister, "going home trachled and draigled in the wet, though I'm told Madam leaves her bairn's death-bed every

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day when he starts, to see that he has his mackintosh and does not forget his umbrella. I could not look him in the face. I cut into Baker Bell's shop door, though I had no business there, as any illdoer might have fled before his victim. I believe that barn of Murray's is not weather-tight, that the roof is leaking already, and the window letting in draughts that cut you to the marrow—and the winter coming on. It will be his death and the death of a hantle more—not that they would all be so missed and mourned, save by the Doctor's self it is like. If I could but niffer with him whiles, give him back his church and take the barn in the worst weather. I'm a year and a half younger and a deal stronger. If he could but have the schoolroom, it is half a mile nearer Muirend and it is comfortable by comparison. But neither kirk nor school is ours to give, Jeames, they are the property of the State."

"They are all that," confirmed Jeames with some emphasis.

"And the barn congregation would look blue, I take it, if they got me in exchange for the Doctor," asserted Adam Pryde, grimly. "I'm told his preaching is more enticing than ever. It would be too hard upon them to offer them chaff for the finest of the wheat"

"No, no, you are doing yourself wrong, father, you have not had much practice, but that will mend day by day. You are a very fair preacher. I thought your last Sunday's sermon uncommonly well thought out, a masterpiece of logic. I do not believe their thrawn Free Kirker, Candlish, could beat it."

Even Jeames's praise, which could not be considered altogether impartial, was grateful to the dispirited man

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"Well, laddie, it is true I worked and swat at it for five mortal hours—I never had a day in the school that could come up to it for fair mental toil. I was as wearied when I had done as if I had tramped a score of miles or shorn a day in hairst. I am right glad you think I did not miss the mark." In another moment reaction came. "Yes, that is all very fine, but I've sore doubts whether a masterpiece of logic ever converted a sinner or saved a soul."

"That must be left to grace," said Jeames not unwisely. "Sometimes the one instrument is used, sometimes the other. But it is grace that employs the logic and makes it succeed for the hard-headed, reasonable man, and does the same with the emotional oratory for the impressionable, sensitive duffer."

The minister did not dispute the proposition, he only said sadly,—

"It is the spiritual-minded man, any way, that with God's blessing does the deed. I've a great fear that I'm the wrong man in the wrong place. I never felt that I was not fit for the school, and could not do my duty by the bairns as well as, and better than, most others. Many is the time I've wished myself back in the desk with the tawse at one side and the ruler at the other—I have not said it to your mother, I need not say it, for women are dour no less than kittle cattle. I cannot tell whether her glory in her drawing-room, her grounds and the rest of it comes up to her expectation, or whether she does not sometimes feel herself far from home in the midst of them, and could wish for the moment to relinquish them to the old Madam of the Manse. But of this I

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am certain, she will never confess to such weakness. She would think me mad or shamming, and it would make her as angry as she could be if I said to her what I have said to you. I ken Katie has her qualms, but your sister is of different mettle from her mother—not that I'm blaming Lizzie Annie to her son—she has done her best according to her lights to be a good wife and mother, and which of us can do more than our best?" he questioned wearily. "Besides, it is as impossible for me to go back to the school and school days, as it is for the Doctor to return to the church he has quitted."

"That is true, sir," acquiesced Jeames with noticeable briskness, "and if it were possible, in all probability you would both regret it."

The reason for this enigmatical speech on Jeames's part was not far to seek. He had been a pattern of filial duty so long as his father had remained the parish schoolmaster, with Jeames for his assistant and successor. He had been aware that the arrangement included the providing a home for his mother and sister after his father's death. He had been resigned to the prospect as an obligation he was bound to fulfil, though in all likelihood it removed to a distant date, if it did not forbid altogether, Jeames's forming domestic ties of his own. But with Adam Pryde parish minister instead of parish schoolmaster, the situation was altered. Jeames had already cast covetous eyes on the blooming daughter of one of the better-to-do farmers who "sat under" his father, and it was not in human nature to encourage so much as an idle, vain supposition of a return to the old bonds.

CHAPTER III

BENJIE'S OPPORTUNITY

WHEN a medical man was called in to attend on Simmie, it seemed to be by the merest accident that the choice fell on Dr Peebles. He had driven past Muirend one day in the gig which belonged to the particular doctor in Kilcairnie, who had made use of him as an honorary assistant. It was on the same day that the more serious of the boy's symptoms became acute and alarming, and the cry was raised, "Did not Dr Roy's gig go past this morning? Watch for its coming back, stop it, and bring in the doctor. It will save ever so much time, for even if we had a messenger to send straight off to Kilcairnie, we could not have a doctor here much before evening."

The chance proved a fortunate one. If skill and care could have saved Simmie, he would have been spared to his family. The young doctor's attention was unremitting. Whatever work he had to do, he never failed the anxious watchers at Muirend. He would come the first thing in the morning, when it was hardly daylight, and the last thing at night, when the stars were setting, sooner than not take his bearings and make his report. He was unwearied in his efforts to coax Simmie's appetite, to

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lessen his fever, to brace up the sinking system. He lavished time, trouble, fatigue without stint, and the gratitude of Simmie's kindred was in proportion.

"I had no idea Benjie Peebles was half so good," said Marjorie, warmly; "we could never repay him even if we were as rich as we are poor. I could not have imagined he would be so gentle with his patients—why, Simmie is quite fond of him, has ceased to mind his stethoscope, and is always wanting to share his sweets with his doctor. Really, to know a man, it seems you must meet him in a sick-room, and learn to admire his patience when he is cold, tired, hungry very likely."

Benjie saw Marjorie at all hours, under all circumstances, and to his credit be it said, he had never admired her young strength and comeliness, her endurance, her indefatigableness more than when she came to him sometimes in a soiled wrapper, which she would rise at break of day to wash out, and stay up till midnight to iron, ready for the morning, with hands hardened and nails chipped, and once, at least, unconscious of a smudge on her fresh round cheek. He had always cherished his admiration of Marjorie of the Manse as a thing to be proud of, which he was conscious did him honour, showing, as it did, how he could appreciate the best when he came across it, and that was a proof that in whatever else he might be deficient, however he might have erred, there was some sympathy between them.

Now that she was Marjorie of the Manse no longer he was brought nearer to her. In a worldly

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sense he was more on a level with her, for his prospects were certainly improving. The doctor in Kilcairn, who had hitherto appropriated without payment as much of Benjie's latest information and most highly-trained skill as he could with decency annex, finding his own health failing more and more, and desiring to secure without question the services he had tested, was in process of offering to Dr Peebles the post of regular assistant, on a modest salary, with the hope of a junior partnership in the near distance, and a succession to the practice when the senior partner withdrew from this world's business. No doubt there were other obstacles than those of a mere income to marry upon. Doctor Menzies, knowing what he did, might not consent to the match. On the other hand, he had been greatly reduced in position and circumstances by leaving the Church, and though in the end the Free Church might recompense him and its other adherents, the result was precarious and doubtful, and necessity grows chary of its scruples.

Benjie had not only admired Marjorie of the Manse, he had desired to admire her, and had fostered the admiration by every means in his power; and to this desire and determination a recent stimulus had been added, which had its origin in the complex nature of the young man. With all Benjie's faults there was something fine about him. He felt doubly committed to his admiration from the moment that he heard some light-minded, light-tongued young fellow say that it was to be regretted Dr Menzies had not been able to dispose of his daughters in marriage before the Disruption; the young ladies

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had been no great catches then, and now their value was far below par.

Benjie recoiled doubly from the base mercenaryness of this assertion. Was he to cease to admire Marjorie Menzies because her father, in his unworldly devotion to what he had held to be his duty, had sacrificed the not very brilliant fortunes of the family, while Marjorie and her mother had accepted their terribly heavy share of the sacrifice not simply with resignation, with something which was more like exultation? What angered Benjie still more was a horrid fear lest those very moderate worldly advantages which Marjorie had lost by her father's disinterestedness or folly, had influenced him in the appreciation on which he had hugged himself. He hated to think of it. If it were so he would despise himself for ever afterwards. But no, he would preserve his self-respect—it was about all he could claim—he would show the world how he disdained such calculations, that he, for one, was steadfast and honourable in his likes as in his dislikes. His bright particular star, which he had worshipped when she was beyond his reach, should not have reason to call him faithless and forsworn now that her orbit had been brought nearer his own. He did admire her immensely; he must admire her still more, with a more personal, tender element entering into the admiration. And the Menzies at this time were dependent for their daily comfort, well-nigh their existence, on Simmie's doctor. Marjorie's heart was soft to him, even as it was sore against her cousin Neil—absent and making no sign—though still, when he was attacked

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she should rise and, as if in accordance with a legacy left to her by the past, defend him through thick and thin.

What might have come of it who can tell—had it not been for the singular, inexplicable contrariety of human nature, of man's nature in this instance. The more Benjie forced himself not only to admire Marjorie, but at once to stretch up to her eminence and to draw her down to his level, the more he felt her towering above his altitude. That frank, natural, kindly young woman!—unapproachably inaccessible, beginning to chill him in her mental and moral superiority. He craved a weaker, more dependent comrade, one who would look up to him for support and guidance, whom he could blame as well as praise, counsel, guide. It is said that no experience is more fatiguing, more likely, unless the nature is very sound and pervaded with a generous humility, to tend to reactionary deterioration than to be constrained by one's own doing, or by the action of others to dwell in a higher, rarer moral atmosphere, to be continually associated with a mind of higher principles and finer perceptions, and altogether wider calibre than the mind which is fated to bear it company. There may be no intentional dictation, no thought of being an improving companion through life; on the contrary, there may be genuine modesty and a tendency to self-effacement, which will only make matters worse, because it will increase the superiority, the process of being improved, even when the subject is honest and well disposed, will always be trying.

Benjie struggled manfully against the conclusion

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until, if the Menzies family, with Marjorie among them, had not been engrossed with Simmie, they would have been driven to notice that the doctor was getting conspicuously attentive to the sister of his patient. But in the middle of the attention, it was not of Marjorie that Benjie was thinking, whenever he gave the reins to his imagination it reverted to another figure and face. He might scold himself for his fickleness, for not distinguishing the nobler attributes, the strong, self-denying offering up of herself without so much as counting the cost, for letting any outward accident mar the beauty of the deed. But he knew in his heart that though he admired Marjorie more than ever, and felt that she could rise above those working clothes in which he saw her most frequently, above the domestic drudgery which snobs and fools might call menial, he preferred Katie Pryde in her neat, carefully studied young lady's dress (for Katie had got beyond the stage in her religion when one is desperately neglectful, elaborately disdainful of her frocks and hats). It was small in him, it was mean, but if he was to be true to himself he could not deny the fact.

He was now staying in lodgings in Kilcainie, but ever since the Prydes had taken possession of the Manse Benjie's feet instinctively carried him thither, where he was welcomed as a matter of course by all the family. When he was inclined to dwell on womanly goodness, it was always the improvement in Katie of which he thought, her greater forbearance with her mother, her wish to please her father, her increasing reasonableness and content. And how he magnified her regard for the

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Menzies, the trouble she took to come and sing to Simmie. It seemed as if the growth of goodness in Katie was enough for him, it was in moderation, what he could understand and approve of—the other soared beyond him. It was admirable in Marjorie, but he questioned whether it would be workable in anyone else—whether it would not be inexpedient and embarrassing in a professional man's wife—especially a professional man whose antecedents could not be gone into and were unmentionable. It was all very well to sneer at conventionalities—in some senses nobody despised them more than he did—still, there were lights in which conventionalities had to be attended to.

Katie Pryde had been singing to Simmie the first psalm he had lisped to his mother, the dearest of all psalms to Scotch hearts—"The Lord's my Shepherd"—and one to which Simmie was partial, because he associated it with the lambs he had been taken to see trotting by their mothers' sides, as the sheep were brought down from the higher moorland pastures. All the family save the Doctor and Duncan happened to be in the little room with Dr Peebles, who had just paid his call. Simmie had fallen asleep during Katie's singing, but she had gone on to the end, fearing that the stopping of the sound of her voice might awaken him. Its pathos kept her small audience still for a minute or two after the psalm had ceased. Benjie roused himself with difficulty, stepped softly to the bed, and bent over the child. The next instant he drew back, making a sign to Marjorie, who had risen under the impression that he wished her to go for something.

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"Get his mother out of the room," he said in an undertone, but Mrs Menzies was already standing by his side.

"No," she said quietly and calmly, "there is no need to break it to me, Simmie is gone, my lamb is in the fold. Do you rather take out the girls, Doctor, lest the first sight of Death be too much for them" (and, indeed, Marjorie, though she did not cry out, was standing with a face as white as the little breathless face on the pillow, while Katie was clinging to her, trembling in every limb). "Leave my bairn to me to change his little night-gown and smooth his hair, and do what is right—for his father to take his last look—and for the last sleep that I'll ever settle Simmie to"

CHAPTER IV

DEAD SYBBIE'S MOTHER SPEAKS AGAIN

ONE of the Daft Wives of Rowanden was seen no more. The awful duplication of the tragedy had ceased to exist. Silly Sybbie had not died "by a dyke-side," that end to human misery which bulks as the most forlorn of all in the Scotch imagination, but she was found lying unconscious by the road that ran over the moor, her mother standing beside her like a pillar of salt. Sybbie's breath passed away as she was being carried to the poorhouse. An effort was made to detain the mother, but in the end it was ineffectual. By force or fraud she continually contrived to escape from her captors, until the authorities grew weary of the fruitless struggle. Besides, the public had been long accustomed to the uncouth wandering figure, and made no protest against its return to its haunts. Those who watched the Daft Wife were assured that she missed her fellow. She would stop and look behind her with a puzzled, uncertain air, then resume her endless journeying. The loss of the silent communion, however low in human intelligence it might have been, seemed to weigh on her and fret her, and drive her to seek other intercourse. She raised her head oftener, and looked more about her in her bent-

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down, brooding walk. She was known to address passers-by in her strange mumbling speech, and nearly frightened timid souls out of their wits. As far as could be distinguished, what she tried to say consisted of inquiries after her daughter. Had anyone seen her? What had become of her? As time passed she recovered more power of speech, her articulation grew plainer, there was more light in her dull eyes, she would evidently listen to the noises around her, she would even loiter, with a sullen secrecy in her movements, near any group of gossips in the village or in Kilcairnie, and appear to be taking note of their conversation, though she never sought to join in it. It was a new phase of behaviour on the part of the Daft Wife, but it was neither so pronounced nor so irritating as to provoke the taking of means to put a stop to it.

A few weeks after Simmie Menzies' death, Dr Menzies found himself waylaid on his daily trudge to the village, where he had sick people to visit, by the Daft Wife with her burdened back and bare head and feet. He was not sorry, particularly as she came up to him and said, "Minister, I want a word with you," for he thought she might have recovered enough of her wits, with her will sufficiently broken down by the shock of her daughter's death, to be applying to him for aid, while he might be able to induce the miserable object before him to consent to be sheltered and fed at the public's expense. He had always felt her condition to be a disgrace to the parish, to any Christian and civilised neighbourhood, but the first slow words she said were discomfiting

"Do you mind me coming to see you with Sybbie,

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when we had as gude as her marriage lines in our hands?"

"Yes, my good woman," he answered gently. "And now I hear poor Sybbie is beyond the reach of blame, or of any amends for wrong done her."

"I'm not a gude woman, and none kens that better than yoursel', ye auld hypocrite," the fierceness with which she answered the only part of his reply to which she seemed to have listened, lending force and firmness to her faltering lips.

"You're not very civil, mem," commented the Doctor, his inextinguishable sense of humour standing him in good stead.

"And what for should I be ceevil?" she demanded haughtily. "But what I want to hear is this. You lost a bairn of your ain the other day. If that bairn had been sairly wranged, what would you do with the last breath of your mouth to the wrangdoer?"

"My bairnie was never wronged, I'm thankful to say," he answered; "but if he had been, I trust I would have left vengeance to the Lord." He hesitated. There was something he could say which might subdue her, but had she enough memory and reason left to comprehend it? He would risk it. "There is something that, maybe, you do not ken," he said cautiously. "Sandilands' nephew went to his account years before Sybbie, who, poor lass! had but a glimmering of light to guide her, but now sees the light none of us here can behold, in God's light. He was an ailing man for many a day—let us hope he considered his latter end, and repented him of his grievous misdeeds."

"I ken naething about Sandilands," she said

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impatiently, and it struck the Doctor that she had lost all recollection of the name and of its connection with her and Sybbie. If she had sufficient capacity to hold a clue to the past, she could not go beyond it, and it was not the one which she might have been supposed to retain in her clouded, numbed brain.

"It was the long offisher man who killed his first captain with a merlyn-spike. He was there yon nicht, you mind, the last time we spoke together, and he interfered and hindered you from seeing that Sybbie was richted."

"You are greatly mistaken, my good—my woman. He is as honest a gentleman as ever lived, though I who say it am his brother. He was never guilty of an act of violence in his born days, unless in fair fight against his King and country's enemies."

"An honest gentleman!" echoed the Daft Wife, with the ghastliest chuckle of a derisive laugh "Him that cam into a great fortien the other day!"

"Not a great fortune, a moderate sum of money—acceptable enough to him as it would have been to his neighbours—left him by an old uncle," corrected the Doctor, instinctively reflecting on the amount of exaggeration which prevailed in the class to which this woman belonged, and from some member of which she must have heard the tale. Yet how heard and how retained and repeated by one who had lived so long apart, an outlaw from her kind? It was as if one of the old Syriac miracles had been performed afresh to his consciousness, as if the deaf had been made to hear, and the dumb to speak.

She might have guessed what was passing in his

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mind by her promptness in replying to it. In the days of her sanity and her passionate personality she had been a woman of strong understanding, and quick, keen perceptions.

"The silly woman who kept house for him, who cannot stir hand or foot, has been carted awa to her own kin, and his Lodgings are shut up. I heard the cummers who had foregathered on the brig, on their way with their race of water stoups back from the Cairnie. It made no odds to him, for he was aff and awa to spend some of his braw-sillar. They didna ken I had said I would be upsides with him, as I will. Man, his sillar is no more his than it is mine, it is yours, every bawbee." ^

"Woman, what are you saying? You are mad, and I'm as mad to listen to you," protested the disturbed Doctor, and the words were not out of his mouth before he shrank from their truth, but she took them as a matter of course.

"Oo I, a'boday kens I'm the Daft Wife of Rowanden—the only ane that is left. But there is something in the big Book you han'le, about the wit that comes out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, and whiles the daft may speak words of sense unkennd by the wise."

"Where is the use of arguing so plain a matter?" The Doctor spoke aloud, but it was to himself. "My Uncle Eben left the money which was his to leave intact, to his brother's elder twin son, and that is the Commodore."

"And that is you, fule that you are!" she put him down rudely "Gae back to your register and see who is first there."

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"Alan was the elder, bigger and stronger, and always put foremost," maintained Alan's brother, staggered and stupefied.

"Archibald—that's you—the wee, weaker ane was the elder," she insisted. "I ken, for though I am as daft as a March hare and forget and mistak, whiles the mist lifts, and the hurly-burly ceases, and I see clear, and mind a thing that took place lang syne, as gin it had happened yesterday."

"What do you mind? What are you talking about? Speak distinctly, if you can," said the Doctor, almost roughly.

"When I first cam to Rowanden I bode with the howdie; I mind when you twa cam into the world as if you had belonged to me. She was taken up with you—she would have me go up to the Manse and see you aince. Your mither was able to be downstairs, and I gaed up and saw you—I had naething on my mind and was fain to please the wife—in your muckle cradle, like a pair of pups or twa kitlens you seemed to me then. And she took you up, ane after the ither, by the middle instead of the scruff of the neck, and she said to me, 'The wee, weakly ane, who will have a struggle to come through even his teething, is the elder, the lusty ane is the younger—I canna understand it, unless the sma' brither has been a supplanter like Jawcob of auld'—for she was a godly woman and weel read in her Bible. But I trow the supplanting has been a' the ither way."

"Have you told anybody else this wild story?" said the Doctor, wiping his forehead. "Does anybody else know of it?"

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"Me gang about telling the kintraside!" cried Sybbie's mother again with that horrible chuckling choke. "It would be like me—me that has not said as many words since—since we'll nō say when—and I would not have spoken them to you, for what care I for your richts? It was little you cared for Sybbie's—if it were not to get upsides wi' the long offisher man, who began with slaying his captain and is now robbing his brother."

"It is false, woman, every word of it false!" declared the Doctor. "Then nobody else has ever heard of it? There is not a particle of proof."

"If you mean is Rachie Elder, the howdie, dead? Her banes have been moulderin' in the yird, of yon kirkyaird o' yours as gude as a score o' years. She left a gude-son though, Tamson the wheelwright, a mensefu' man, you're bound to ken him. He may have her books. She was an educate woman and keepit books regular, entering all the bairns she brocht into the warld, with their condition, like the city watchmen that used to cry 'sax o'clock and a fine frosty morning.' Rachie Elder would have a lad bairn—wise and warld-like. So gude-day to you, minister. I wuss *you* nae ill, though you made nae stand for me and mine. What I wuss is that you may hae your ain and strip the long man wha killed his first captain wi' a merlyn-spike."

She turned and tramped off with the growing lurch, from side to side, which swayed the burden on her back. It was the gait of the old and the weary who hide neither age nor weariness, and for half a lifetime have been absolutely indifferent to how they appear in the eyes of their neighbours.

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The Doctor was glad to be quit of her, while she left him in a state of perturbation akin to consternation. Of course, her words had been the ravings of a mad woman, among them the reiterated frenzied accusation of the Commodore's having slain his first captain. No one would pay the smallest heed to what she mumbled after her long silence. He and Alan in their childhood had simply been ranked as "the twins." He did not think he had ever heard it distinctly stated which was the elder and which the younger. It went without saying, Alan had always been the head taller, and during their early days very much the stronger and further forward. The Doctor had been well through his studies for the ministry before he quite threw off the delicacy of his infancy. He could not recall that he had ever once heard his father contradict what everybody else, including the boys themselves, took for granted, that Alan was the elder. If their mother had lived for any length of time after their birth, she might have been more communicative and more precise in her statements—trust women for clinging to details. But of course Alan was the elder born. How could the general belief have arisen without some grounds? He had heard something of the old howdie or midwife, who, like one of the Fates, had presided over the births of high and low in the parish for a generation. But she had left the place while two of her bairns—Alan and himself—were still children. She had gone to keep house for a widowed son who lived at some distance, and had only been brought back in her coffin, to be laid by the side of her husband in Rowanden churchyard.

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He did not put the smallest weight on the Daft Wife's assertion, nobody in his senses would. But he had been startled and shaken, and, as by an odd coincidence, he had been on his way to keep an appointment with the new session-clerk who had succeeded Adam Pryde in the office, with regard to the entry of Simmie's death in the register. He might as well take a look, out of mere curiosity, to see how his birth and the Commodore's had been recorded fifty-six years before. The Doctor had meant to see the man at his house, but he could accompany him to the vestry, where the books were kept. He would be guilty of no trespass, he was entitled to see the register, and even if he and the present minister, Adam Pryde, stumbled upon each other in the course of the Doctor's investigation, what then? The Master would be the last man to object.

The vestry was as old as the church—an ancient room under the same roof. The Doctor went up the well-known path feeling like a disembodied spirit revisiting a familiar scene of his past life. He knew the man who accompanied him as he knew every native of the place, and the man knew the Doctor and was painfully anxious to be civil and obliging, with an element of pity added to his respect and regard for his former minister. For the Doctor seemed to him fallen away and absent-minded, while his overcoat—never wont to be of the handsomest—was shabbier than ever, with its shabbiness emphasised by the white cuffs or "weepers" mourners then wore on their sleeves, just as the slight rustiness of his hat was exaggerated by the

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crape band around it. The fact was, the Doctor was preoccupied, and the man himself embarrassed and shy under their changed relations.

Dr Menzies stood aside as any stranger would have done, while the session-clerk unlocked the press or cupboard in which the registers—a goodly number of volumes reaching back to the Reformation, of whose unbroken continuity the man now waiting to inspect a volume had, in the days when he was the established minister of that church, been proud. The Doctor mentioned the year of the volume he wished, got it into his hands, and speedily found the page he sought. Yes, there it was, in the stiff, yellowing handwriting, from information communicated by his father, no doubt. “Archibald Ainslie Menzies, Alan Corstorphine Menzies, twin sons of Archibald Menzies and Katherine Corstorphine, his wife, born at the Manse of Rowanden on the 22nd of August 1790, christened Archibald Ainslie in the Manse on the 25th August (because he was not expected to live over the day), Alan Corstorphine in the church on the 30th of the said month.”

The Doctor stared transfixed. But what was there in the priority given to a name—the merest chance might have decided it—especially in the case of twins, who are usually reckoned roughly of the same age. He had always known—to his cost even when he was very young—that he had been a delicate child from his birth. That confirmation went for nothing. Had the entry been made a hundred, or even fifty years earlier it would probably have been more minute—as if with the intention of having his

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horoscope drawn up, not merely the day but the hour at which each child was born, such a notification would have rendered security doubly sure—not that there was the least insecurity as to whether Alan or he were the elder—there was really nothing—seriously nothing to overturn the accepted conviction. Then, as the Doctor's eyes rested on the names of his father and mother, he gave a nervous start—he was aware that his grandfather's name was the same as his father's and his own, "Archibald Ainslie Menzies." How had that come to pass when, by the old, well-defined rule in Scotland, the eldest son was named for his father's father, the second son for his mother's father, the rule being in fairness reversed where daughters and grandmothers were concerned, the eldest daughter bearing the name of her mother's mother, the second of her father's mother. Yet here, looking him in the face, and striking him a blow, was a contradiction. How was it that he, the second born of the twins, was named for his paternal grandfather, while Alan, the first born, was named for his maternal grandfather?

Bah! these old world rules for family names were not inflexible like the laws of the Medes and the Persians. They were movable according to taste and fancy. An imagined likeness, an opportune christening gift might on any occasion upset the stereotyped plan.

He was aroused from his reverie as he hastily closed the volume by a sympathetic remark from his companion.

"I hope the poor young gentleman did not suffer much, sir?"

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"Yes—no—not at the end, Ferrier, my boy died in his sleep. I hope your wife has not been troubled with her old trouble, bronchitis, lately?" He was recalled to the present and to the past of recent date as he looked around him. The odd inquiry which brought him there was thrust out of his mind for the moment. It was here he had come Sunday after Sunday for many a year to change his coat for his Geneva gown. A caraffe with water and a glass was wont to stand on the table for his refreshment, when he came back hot and thirsty after the service, which he conducted single-handed, save for the precentor—and for the revival of any of the women among the congregation who, having walked some distance in hot weather, now and then got sick and faint as they sat listening. His Sessions had held their meetings here, he seemed to see their well-remembered faces, conspicuous among them the shrewd, masterful face of the Master—the ruling elder. When *his* Session assembled on the same spot did he or any of the others ever see his predecessor's face looking in upon them?

The Doctor went home that night and did not say a single word—not to his Mary, from whom he had never before kept a secret—of what had befallen him. Another day intervened in which he took no step as if nothing had happened, or as if what had occurred was beneath his attention. But on the following day he hurried over his breakfast and set out early, and the first place he went to was Tamson's, the wheelwright's, at the further end of the village; for throughout his three miles' walk there had rung in his ears with feverish importunity the

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suggestion—"Good Heavens! if the Daft Wife, whose tongue has been tied so long, should have taken to wagging it to others than to me. Daft as they ken she is, and has been for many a year, there are folk who will ignore her daftness, if it stand between them and a spicy piece of gossip. They will receive it as gospel—what can you expect? when even I have been tempted to think the dumb has been made to speak, to give me this information. And if the other old woman who was not daft has left it in writing and it falls into other hands than mine—"

Wright Tamson had not been a member of the Doctor's church—he was of the Baptist persuasion and was in the habit of walking as many miles in the opposite direction to a village in which a Baptist meeting was held. But he was a sensible, modest man who considered it a compliment that the Doctor should call on him, and ask if he still had any book belonging to his wife's mother in which she had entered the parish births at which she had assisted. He—the Doctor—had heard of something of the kind, and there was a matter of a birth or two that he would like to turn up. These would happen, he would say, in the beginning of the nineties—ay, in 1791 or it might be 1790. As the Doctor put his question with intentional vagueness, he blushed to find how trippingly his tongue lent itself to deceit—he who had always reckoned himself a man of strict truthfulness.

"I think so, Doctor—a wheen pass-books that the wife and me have kept for her mother's sake—a clever woman, sir, and a gude ane that fended for

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her bairns when their father was taken from them, so that they never kenned the want of him. Come in by, Doctor, and I'll rax down the bookies from the shelf."

The dissenter, not of to-day or yesterday but of old standing, saw no difficulty in the circumstance that his visitor was no longer the parish minister who was entitled to busy himself with parish annals of births, marriages and deaths old and new. And his wife was even more gratified by a request which would serve to bring to light her mother's superiority in education and capability.

"Ay, sir, she was a by-ordinary woman, my mother. After she left the parish scule she was in a gude place or twa, and when my faither deed she had her turn in the Lyin'-in Hospital, when we bairns were sent to granny; they was a' her advantages, but no doctor among them could have been more purpose like. She would keep a note of a' her cases just for her ain satisfaction, for neither man nor woman ever called her doings in question. They were ower glad to get her help, and mony is the time, if ye'll believe me, sir, she gave it for love, where the money was not forthcoming, and that after she was failin' hersel'."

"Here's the very ticket, Doctor," called the wright from the corner in which he stood, reaching up and rummaging among the contents of a shelf representing his library, beginning with the family Bible, and extending through a Matthew Henry's commentary, a history of the late (the Peninsular) war, a pile of *Chambers's Journals*, and half a dozen common pass-books. He held one of the last so that he could

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examine the date—"Seventeen hunder and ninety—na, it is twa, no ane, but the tither is seventeen hunder and ninety—the rest are later. Tak and keep them, sir, and welcome, if they're of ahy use to you—you see we've mair to mind us and the bairns of their fine old granny—which is all the concern we have wi' them."

Before the Doctor could thank the liberal donor the wright's wife uttered an exclamation which sounded as if, so far as secrecy was in question, the fat was in the fire.

"Seventeen hunder and ninety? Eh! that was the year she brocht you and your brither, the Commodore, hame—I've heard her speak of it often—you see she had not so mony twinnies among her cases, no above sax or aicht in the whale course of her business. There were Dick the shoemaker's twa, and the pair of the Major and his leddy, strangers that rented Walker's farm for six months, and—"

"Weel, what mair naitural than that a man should want to hear a' the particulars of his hamecoming?" interrupted the wholesome-looking, "buidly," cheery wright. "If it were not for present company that kens a', I would say better than I do mysel', I micht mention that the way and the speerit of the wa'-going is of mair consequence. But there, I see the Doctor is fidgetin' to be gone about the business of which he must have a rale handsome share."

And the Doctor, for the rest of his work among his Church members, while he was praying with the sick, while he was listening to the report of one of

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the elders who reminded him of new "forms" or benches wanted for Murray's Barn and so forth, had these homely old notebooks buttoned tightly in his pocket. He never lost the consciousness of them, had even a painful sense that they were weighing him down like so much lead, and burning through his clothes like so many coals of fire, but he did not once unbutton his coat and take them out, far less turn the leaves and cast one desperate glance at the date he knew so well—not after he had stolen behind a hedge or a tree on the somewhat lonely road to Muirend farm—not after he had arrived at home and was in the midst of his family, as they were gathered round the tea-table, and he was at once ordered and implored to eat the contents of the special plate of what he called "mince collops," jealously prepared and jealously kept for him—not when he was speaking fast and continuously.

"You have a great deal to say to-night, Archie—lie back and rest and eat your tea-dinner." And again, when he had suddenly lapsed into total silence and maintained it for a much longer period than he was aware,—

"Father, you're done up, you'll write no sermon to-night. Mother will read the newspaper to you, or, better still, since her eyes are weak, she will beat you in a game of draughts."

Not till Duncan had returned for the night, not till all the little family had retired save himself, staying up on that convenient plea of sermon-writing, did he close the door, draw the single candle to his elbow, and having taken out the one crumpled soiled little book he cared to see, turned over the

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few pages with trembling fingers till, he came to that fateful 22nd of August. Then, peering by the dim light at the round, parish-school handwriting, not illegible save for the paleness of the ink, he read the entry: "Called to the Manse about noon, was there all day and the following night, delivered the minister's lady of twin sons, the first at twenty minutes past eight, and the second at a quarter from ten in the evening, all regular and in order, save that the first twin is by far the smaller and weaker—the lady and the stronger twin doing well—the life of the other not to be lipped to. This is the first instance in my experience of twins that the elder has been the littler and the weaklier bairn."

There was another entry relating to the Menzies twins on the next page. "The feeble twinnie at the Manse was reckoned nigh hand death yesterday, the 25th, by Dr Purves, and 'deed he looked very like it, so the minister christened him straightway in Mrs Menzies' room, in the presence of the mother, Dr Purves and myself, by his grandfather's and his father's own name, 'Archibald Ainslie.' Later in the day the wean picked up a little, and ettled to take the breast. He may pull through, but he'll be a sore handful"

The Doctor pushed the book from him, laid his arms across the table, and rested his bald head upon them.

Legally the mistake with regard to the seniority of the twins would have mattered not at all if in their Uncle Eben's bequest, by which the Commodore had profited, the Christian name and the rank or profession of the legatee had been given, but all three had been absent. The legacy had simply been left

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to "the elder twin son of the Rev. Archibald Menzies, minister of the parish of Rowanden," etc. The Doctor knew the terms of the will, because they had excited considerable speculation—half amused, half indignant. Had Uncle Eben cared so little and thought so little of the nephew to whom he had left the bulk of his savings that he had not even remembered his Christian name? He had probably retained a recollection that he was in the Navy, at least that he was not a minister of the Church of Scotland, for it was in a pet at the Doctor's continuing his studies for the ministry, and not availing himself of his self-important, dogmatic relative's offer to procure him admittance to a merchant's office in London that the original offence had been given. It had caused Uncle Eben, in that grudge of long ago, to concentrate his favours to the best of his knowledge on his nephew Alan, cutting off the Doctor and his sister, Mrs Forsyth, who had been so silly as to be a niece instead of another nephew, with less than the proverbial shilling. But if he had not forgotten the Commodore's profession he had not thought it worth the trouble of mentioning or ascertaining as to what position in the service Alan had attained. And by this heartless indifference the testator had gone near to lending an entirely different construction to his will as it stood. For, according to the truth which had just leaked out, the administering of the will could unquestionably be disputed with every probability of success.

The Doctor suffered his mind to realise the difference which would have been made to him and his family if he had inherited the moderate fortune

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which had gone to the Commodore, who had not been a brother born for adversity, who had renounced him—Alan's twin-brother—and all connected with him from the hour of his publicly declared adherence to the Free Church. It might not have saved little Simmie, as it certainly could not bring him back, but it would have raised the Menzies above the misery of penury, and left them in comparative ease and comfort. Charlie and Hughie would no longer have their dawning careers starved and crushed by lack of funds. Duncan would cease to stand behind a counter, and would receive that education of a gentleman which his brothers had enjoyed. Marjorie and her mother, now that Mary was released from a sick-room, would no longer contend with each other as to who was to discharge the heavier tasks as joint maids-of-all-work. And he himself, when he was clean worn out—he sometimes feared the time would not be far distant, would not be a burden on his family, a burden on the Church—as yet its adherents had answered splendidly, nobly to the calls made upon them—but would their munificence continue in one grand, inexhaustible stream? Was it reasonable to expect it? The Free Church was a young Church, its fortunes might be chequered as the years rolled by. Adversity and destitution might lie before some of its ministers—men, like himself, up in years, in poor remote parishes—where those who had followed their shepherds into the wilderness were without the means of contributing, unless by their mites, to the support of those shepherds, and oh! how he should hate to become a pensioner on the poor of his people. Hitherto there had been a most honour-

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able endeavour to dispense the funds of the Church with equality and impartiality, so that, as in the case of the manna which fell from heaven for the Israelites, none should be left without, and none have an undue share. But that was the direct result of admirable organisation. There were indirect sources of supply in large, wealthy city congregations which it would be as impossible, as in all likelihood it would be undesirable for convener or committee to interfere with the control, so that while these runlets fed the main stream, at the fountain head, at the far extremities the shrunk waters might be insufficient to meet the wants of those unfortunates who were solely dependent on their flow.

Suddenly the Doctor lifted his head, rose up and stood so erect before the embers of fire in the grate that his rather low stature seemed to expand and increase by whole inches. The dazed look left his face. It resumed even more of its usually open, bright expression, while another line of argument possessed him and overwhelmed the first. Nothing could be more morally certain than that Eben Menzies had designed the estate he left behind him for his nephew Alan. He, old Eben Menzies, had as good as announced his preference many years before, and through whatever change of circumstances he had stuck to his intention—so to Alan the fortune had belonged, and in equity would never cease to belong, while life lasted. If it had been otherwise, if it had been possible to question the justice of the assignment and to bestow it in another quarter, which happily it was not, it would have meant ruin to poor Alan, debt and disaster, what

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would have been undeserved degradation to him, which no austere self-denial on his side could have repaired. It would have clouded the innocent Neil's opening life and fair prospects beyond remedy.

But as for him and his, the Doctor's faith did not falter, it only meant the old dependence on Providence which had never failed him yet—the old acceptance of God's will, which he was well assured—was it not the strength and joy of his heart to know it?—was holy, and just, and wise, and good. He strode nimbly to the table—he felt younger and fitter than he had done for years—seized old Rachie Elder's book, tore out the pages which referred to the birth of him and his brother twin, and flung them into the grate where there was still enough life in the embers to send up a flame to catch, crumple and consume them. There perished the proofs of the Doctor's seniority while he looked on smiling. Any evidence which existed in his place in the parish register and his Christian name, even if it were ever detected, would be too flimsy and fantastic to be of any service. And who would believe the story of a daft, dumb wife, although she at last opened her mouth to mumble it over the length and breadth of the countryside?

CHAPTER V

BROTHERS ARE BROTHERS EVERMORE

TEN days later than the morning on which the last survivor of the Daft Wives of Rowanden waylaid Dr Menzies, and made him a party to her plot to beggar the Commodore, her lifeless body was found in the river Cairnie. The question of suicide was hardly raised. If she had meant to "put away herself" those who discussed the point were sagacious enough to decide she would have done it many a year before. Her daughter's death had affected her a good deal; it had altered her habits considerably. It could not be said to have made her more sane or more insane, but it had certainly unsettled her, broken down the barriers of silence and utter indifference she had raised between her and her kind, invested her with some of the "feyness" or abrupt, unnatural change of mien and behaviour which was said to betoken sudden death or sudden calamity. This elder of the two Daft Wives had broken down so as to show her age much more conspicuously. Her bare, tousled grey head and brown feet—very much of the colour and the hardness of the roads they trod—were what they had long been, but her gait was not the same, and what less improbable than that, in her stumbling tramp

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and lurch, as she went at nightfall along the road that skirted the steepest bank of the Cairnie, she had missed her balance and, fallen from the unprotected height into the water unseen and unrescued?

Katie Pryde was returning up the Manse avenue when she met Benjie—Dr Peebles—coming down from the Manse.

"Where are you going?" she inquired. "I want you to come with me and see the dahlias,"—for Benjie's studies in botany had led him to a knowledge of flowers and a taste for them.

"Not now, Katie, some other day."

"Why not now?" Katie asked with a pout. "It would not keep you five minutes."

"I have an engagement, and I am late already."

"You are tremendously sober about it. What sort of engagement is it? It does not sound as if it were a pleasant one," she said, with the privileged curiosity of old and intimate acquaintance.

He took a step forward as if he were not going to answer her, then changed his mind.

"No, it is not pleasant," he said in an odd voice, "your father has just told me that the—the old woman who was drowned in the Cairnie two nights ago is to get a pauper's funeral at three o'clock, and I have a mind to be present."

"Oh! how good of you!" she cried with ready enthusiasm. "Were you called to see her when she was taken out of the water? Any way, it does you credit—the last of the poor Daft Wives of Rowanden. But she was human after all, Benjie, a woman like other women once. It is right that somebody should be there to see that no indignity is suffered to take

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place, and my father has been sent for by the wife of a man who has been hurt in Todd's Quarry."

"Yes," he said slowly, as if weighing his words and yet speaking half-abstractedly, more to himself than to any other listener. "And I missed the other funeral; I happened to be in Edinburgh when the— younger was found lying on the moor and died on her way to the workhouse."

Katie looked at him a little mystified.

"Poor things!" she observed wonderingly. "Theirs was a terrible fate—one of the awful mysteries in God's providence. I—I like you, Benjie, for reverencing it"

"Don't," he cried with harsh abruptness, and then there came over him that overwhelming craving for sympathy which drives many a criminal to confession, many a holder of a life-long secret to reveal it on the irresistible temptation of a moment. "Turn and walk a bit with me, Katie, and I will tell you something I never breathed to mortal man or woman before. I was bound to attend those women's funerals whether they were buried as paupers or as princesses, for do you know they are my kin—my nearest kin—all I've ever come across."

She stared at him aghast, and would have stopped, but he held her arm fast and drew her on.

"Benjie, how can you make such a horrid joke?" she demanded indignantly. He smiled so grimly that, in place of being lit up by the smile, his dark face seemed to grow darker with the contortion.

"I am not joking. I should not dream of being guilty of such an ill-judged performance. I am in dead earnest. I am the son of the younger of the

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Daft Wives—her they called ‘Silly Sybbie’—and of a scoundrel belonging to the Sandilands’ family. ‘I believe he is dead too, and beyond my curses. There, you have all the pretty story, Katie. Your father has known it since I was a child, and so has the Doctor; while a few other people of their generation may have guessed—I think so, from what occurred.’

The word “impossible” hovered upon her lips, but she recalled the mystery of his birth, and, together with it, the romance which she and Marjorie of the Manse—especially she, Katie—had conjured up of the grand gentleman Benjie was to turn out some day, and the fine friends who were to claim him—and she burst into a passion of tears.

“Hush! hush! Are you so sorry as all that? It is not worth it. You will make me sorry that I have vexed you—I ought to have kept my miserable story to myself—as, indeed, I have done for many a day. It was not for your ears, dear, tender little Katie—I was a wretched, selfish cur to trouble you with it.”

“No, no,” she protested, turning and clasping the arm she had held with a touch which thrilled his proud, aching heart. “I am so sorry, dear, dear Benjie. Who could have had the cruelty to tell you? How long have you known it?”

“In part ever since I was a child. They—the women—the elder of them—made up to me—she was not so lost to what was passing around her then—and I knew that there was some connection between us, while I was too scared to defy her threats and tell somebody—which would have

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been a blessed relief—you or Jeames, if not your father.”

“Poor child, poor little forlorn child!” cried Katie in a paroxysm of pity.

“Don’t take it so to heart, my dear; the worst is past, I think. But there is something else I should like to tell you, Katie. When I was older I heard scraps of things, pieced them together, and arrived at the truth. The first money I made I tried to reach them and provide for them in decent comfort. I employed lawyers at a distance, who concealed my identity, while they communicated with the parish authorities and Kinnears’ firm in Kilcairnie. But it was impossible—the women would not submit to restraint or control of any kind. They would go their own way and no other. They had long given over recognising me; but I tried speaking to—my grandmother when I met her and—my mother alone in the road—she only scowled, and passed on. I believe she had forgotten all about me. I hear since her daughter was taken from her she has had more intercourse with her fellow-creatures, has been trying to listen and speak again. It was the beginning of the end—and it is all over. And I am letting her be buried like a pauper, while, if I told our relationship, it would be different. But it would mean the exposure of the whole pitiful story—and what do you think, Katie? If she could get her choice, would she not prefer to be laid by her daughter, with whom she shared a strange companionship while the daughter lived—the one tie she realised, and never renounced from first to last? She had regard for her child, if for none besides.”

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"You can do nothing else than what you are doing," said Katie, with sorrowful conviction. "I am sure my father would agree with you."

"The Master is not aware that I know who I am. I have never asked him, and he may have noticed that, but, except for some suspicion of the kind, he has no reason to suppose that I have anything to do—beyond a sense of common humanity—with the woman who is to be buried to-day."

Katie's impressionable, romantic heart was impressed more deeply than ever with Benjie's wrongs and sufferings—what a hard world would call his shame—and when she received the information that she was his sole confidante, she experienced a very agony of unavailing pity.

"If I could only help you—if I knew how we could make up to you!" she implored him with those great wistful eyes of hers fixed on his face.

Benjie smiled sadly—not bitterly this time. He knew very well how she, at least, could make up to him. But he would be a scamp to tell her so, and let her pity run away with her. And yet human nature—the longing for the one compensation it could offer him, was tugging at his heart-strings.

"Thank you very much for your pity," he began, but she interrupted him hotly and imperiously,—

"I will not have your thanks—who should pity you if not I? And if you cared—" she stopped abruptly.

"Don't say you could give me your love as well as your pity," he forbade her fiercely; "don't tempt a poor devil too far."

"Is it tempting you to tell you to take what is

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your own, as you are forcing me to do?" she broke out in generous abandonment.

The next time they met he reminded her despondently,—

"But your father, knowing all, will never give his consent, and who that knows can wonder at it?"

"I am not sure," she said thoughtfully. "Father is not the man he was; he is ever so much more patient and gentle. And do you know, Benjie, he is beginning to preach such good sermons, as if he were getting at the heart of the matter. People do not sleep half so much, and old Mr Cooper, who lost his wife last month, was quite affected last Sunday. He used to look such a hard old man."

"Your father will do his best, and I daresay he will mellow in the pulpit. I, who have known him in another character, would not be so likely to fall asleep either as—you won't be offended, Katie?—if I could imagine him holding a pair of tawse under his gown."

"Of course I am not so silly as to be offended, and I fancy, now that I understand things better, that to be a good schoolmaster is not an altogether bad preparation for being a good minister, with God's blessing on both."

"I hope you will be a true prophet."

"I hope so. Mother, who will never know, will be perfectly pleased with you as Dr Roy's assistant and successor. Father, who does know, will say after a time, when he has got accustomed to the idea, 'It was no fault of his, poor fellow! I had always a liking for him and a respect for his abilities and his

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staunchness in making the best of them. If the sins of the fathers are visited on the children, we know also they are remitted when the children turn and do well. Benjie is one of ourselves in a sense, we seem to have part and lot in him already—as he has been leal to his early home and his upbringing, so as to do credit to them, we will be leal to him. Over and above all, that lassie Katie has set her heart on her old schoolmate and playfellow now that he is a young doctor chap—and we must not conter Katie, na, Katie has not been used to contering—I doubt the poor lad will find her a spoilt bairn.’”

The days were beginning to draw in fast in chill October, apt to be very chill in Scotland, and “dowie” as November, at that period of the year which brothers and sisters in the West, seeing it in the tempered glory of an Indian summer and associating it with the burning red and gold of the dropping sumach and maple leaves, distinguish by the poetic name of the “Fall.” But old-fashioned, homely Scotch people are moved by its grey mists and sodden dismalness, to term it by no less direly prosaic and hideously matter-of-fact a repetition as that of “the back-end” of the year.

Muirend farmhouse had never looked bleaker and meaner, and Marjorie, ironing by the kitchen table, glanced out of the window, with a sigh, at the forlorn kailyard which the toils and trials of the previous summer had prevented from being anything better than a kailyard.

It was cheerier to look within rather than without, at the screen laden with clean clothes, at the glowing fire of fragrant, pungent peat. Luckily it was a peat

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district so that fuel was inexpensive. Thus it chanced that Marjorie missed the first token of the arrival of two strangers, till one of them burst in upon her unceremoniously, and the other stalked at his heels.

Heedless that she was in her own house, that is to say in her father's, the first person began to load her with reproaches, the second chiming in with a mournful profoundness of pain, that was almost more overpowering than the keen indignation of the first.

"How could you do it, Marjorie? How could you come with them to this hole, without telling me? You knew you had only to write and I would have come from the ends of the earth to help you?"

No, she had not known, but she knew it now, looking into his blazing eyes and hearing his ringing tones. Neil—who was ordinarily so quiet and composed. She knew that as a sharp touch of frost, that as the pale cold light of the moon will give the finishing touch to the ripening of certain grains and fruits, so latent love, love stirred to the depths by a tale of privations and sorrows, will spring up to full growth, as in a night, and vindicate its rights.

"We had not your German address, Neil," answered Marjorie with commendable meekness, "otherwise we should have let you know of Simmie's death. And we thought you could not but know, Uncle Alan."

"I did not, Marjorie. I had gone to Midtryst to look after some business of Neil's at the time it happened. When I did hear, I was hurt that I had not been told of my brother's child's death, not even of his serious illness."

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"I suppose we were wrong," granted Marjorie, "but, Uncle Alan, we were hurt, too, and we had so much to do and to think of."

"Yes, you were slaving yourself into your graves like poor dear little Simmie," cried Neil, still madly wroth, "and you would not have cared though I had come back and found you all dead and gone."

The supposititious slaughter was so wholesale that Marjorie could not restrain a quavering laugh, and even the raging madman was betrayed into a savage smile; after which he snatched the iron Marjorie had been holding all the time from her grasp, put it down without scorching himself, handed Marjorie and his father chairs, sat down himself and was a shade more reasonable.

"We thought you had taken a house in Kilcainie, and later, when my father learned you were here—well, he has gone about very little of late, he wanted to keep his distance, you knew he was a shy man. He is not so observant as a younger man might be—are you, father? And he had got confused in his recollection of what sort of den you had taken refuge in."

"Upon my word, Neil, you are not complimentary, hardly civil," declared Marjorie, who was recovering her spirit and self-mastery. "Midtryst had need to be a palace to hear you speak."

"You will judge for yourself some day, unless you go off on other wild tangents and drive your friends beside themselves. No, I do not mean that you did it all on your own account, of your own accord," he admitted reluctantly. "But I could not have believed

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that you would not have known better, left the others to cool down, and spoken or written to my father."

"What! without *my* father's knowledge and consent? Going against him and mother, as if they had been in the wrong? when I think them quite right. What do you take me for, Neil?" Marjorie fired up.

"It was not, Marjorie who was to blame." The Commodore defended his old favourite. "It was Archie. To think that my own brother should have been in straits—I declare him and his not far from starvation—and had not enough faith in me left to come to me!"

"All that you can do to atone," insisted Neil with specious magnanimity, "is to go at once—all of you—to the Commodore's Lodgings. There is room enough and to spare. It is the greatest kindness you can do to my father. Since Mrs Ord felt she could be of no more use, and withdrew, while she was able, to her sister's, he has been left to the tender mercies of idle, dishonest servants. If it had not been for Bill I don't believe he would have been to the fore. Think of it, Marjorie, you who used to scold me when he had to ask for fresh ink, and when the particular apple he favoured was not in the fruit dish, and I trusted to you to look after his comfort," he ended with well-feigned reproach.

"Then it shall be looked after in future—that is, if you will let me, Uncle Alan. But as to burdening you with a household of people, there are two at a bargain-making, and I am not one of the two."

At that moment the door opened, and Mrs Menzies, who had heard voices in the kitchen, stood in the entrance. There was only a moment's pause

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before she came forward, like the well-bred woman she was, as if the party had separated only yesterday, and strife and alienation had never been so much as dreamt of between them.

"How are you, Alan? You have got your son back, I see. Neil, your visit will be a great pleasure to your father. Marjorie, your ironing can wait. I agree with you that the kitchen may be the warmest room in the house to-day, but I have just seen to the sitting-room fire, and I imagine your uncle and cousin will be more at home there."

The Commodore stood up gaunt and grey, coming to the point at once with his few fine words

"Mary, Neil and I are here to fetch you home with me. You are not reduced to this—you should never have been while I had a roof over my head. I was not aware—I did not understand. Forgive me, Mary. Let us be friends again for Archie and the children's sake."

"I have nothing to forgive, Alan. The request may be reversed so far as the words of an angry woman were concerned. You are very kind, I am sure you mean to be." She paused for an instant, and began again with a half smile, "Do you know Archie once said that he had been a hard husband to me, because he had taken me, with right goodwill on my side, from my father's house of Lossiemuir, and brought me to work with and for him and the bairns, as I was fain to do, as it was my life to do. But I have been thinking of late that it is I who have been a hard wife to him—not in the sense that you may think. Archie was man enough to form his opinions without help from his wife, and that I should agree with him

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was a foregone conclusion. And we would do it over again, leave the old Church, taking our lives and the lives of those dearest to us in our hands to-morrow, if a repetition of the sacrifice were required. For however you may see it, Alan, we count it fighting for the freedom of the Kirk and the Covenant of our forefathers. But words of bitterness withheld—ay, or one word tending to reconciliation spoken, as he would have spoken it, if I had but given a look when we were like to be homeless, when our bairn was swimming for his life, soon to be in extremity, and how much might have been spared—how much changed! The past cannot be undone, but for the future I will not be a hard wife, where it is simply my pride and not an eternal principle that is in question. We'll leave the acceptance or rejection of your brotherly proposal—with heartfelt thanks either way—to Archie."

And when the Doctor in his turn stood on the threshold, growing very red and then white, and with his eyes waxing dim, all he said was the old familiar, "Is that you, Alan? And you, Neil? I'm blithe to see you."

And what he could he would do for them—the very best—what would set their regret and remorse at rest, and afford to all who cared to see an example of brothers tried, provoked, sundered, dwelling together in harmony at last.

"But what will they do about 'the Books'—about the difference in their manner of conducting family worship?" was the first dismayed objection that started up in Marjorie's mind after the half incredulous joy at the reunion effected by the trans-

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ference of the household to the Commodore's Lodgings, with her mother presiding over her Uncle Alan's housekeeping and she the right hand of all three—of the Doctor, the Commodore, and the former Madam at the Manse, not without gratuities of her attentions to her cousin Neil, and to her sister Nelly.

Marjorie had forgotten that her father would be her uncle's guest, that he was one of those ministers of the Gospel—the very poorest and least gifted of whom her Uncle Alan held in high respect—and that being so, whether for grace before dinner, or whether when the servant placed the Books for the evening exercise before her master, Uncle Alan was certain to waive the obligation and to say, "Archie, will you say grace?" "Archie, it is for you to conduct the service."

In days to come red-hot Free Kirkers would sniff a little dubiously at the condition of their denomination in that out-of-the-way corner of the Queen's dominions. Lukewarm they called it—decidedly lukewarm. It was all very well to speak of Dr Menzies' learning and of the high reputation for piety and worth he had brought with him when he seceded from the old, and gave his gifts to fortify the new Church. But what of his carelessness and supineness when, after taking the grant from the fund, he and his family eventually settled to live with his brother, a rank Moderate. He had refused so much as to give a morsel of ground as a site for a Church to accommodate his own brother. Ultimately the Doctor, after preaching for a time in a barn, had to combine his congregation with the Free congregation in the next parish of Kininmonth, where a site

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had been obtained, and a barn-like church run up, and where it seemed the Doctor's preaching was in request.

(This statement was so far erroneous and originated in a confusion between the Commodore's old mess-mate, Lord Sandilands, and the Commodore himself, who never had possessed an inch of ground to bestow upon sites or on anything else, any more than the old Castle of Pithead, which was his Lodgings, retained an acre of its once broad lands.)

The Doctor's elder daughter had back-slidden so far as to consent to marry the son of her host—himself a minister in the Established Church—one of the apostate Evangelicals who had drawn back from quitting the Church at the last moment. It was one comfort that Miss Menzies had done no worse than the daughter of the schoolmaster body who had succeeded Dr Menzies as the Established Church minister of Rowanden. She had married a young Kilcainie doctor brought up in her father's schoolhouse, no one knew from where, nor from whom. And his regard for ordinances had been of the slightest—everybody knew the ways of those godless young doctors whose patients were always interfering and calling for attendance during the hours for public worship, as if twice as many people were taken ill on Sundays as on Saturdays and Mondays. It was a mercy that his wife, who had entertained a leaning to the Non-intrusion side of the controversy, and had undergone some sort of awakening at their earlier meetings, took her doctor in hand, and brought him to church in the character of a Christian for at least some Sabbath diets of worship.